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LETTERS FROM HELL.

VOL. I. - II (in one)

LETTERS FROM HELL.

91645

BY

M. ROWEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE,

Which should not be overlooked.

For ages there has been a widely extended belief in the existence of letters or messages from Heaven. Were they collected together, they would form by no means a diminutive code. Letters from Hell deserve equal credit; aye, even greater! For what can the saints in light have to write to us about? It is a different matter with the others. The rich man in the Gospel evidently felt an inward longing to communicate with those he had left in the world behind him.

Let everybody form his own opinion and judgment on the matter. I have only the simple duty to perform of attesting to the authenticity of these Letters. Should any one

entertain any doubt thereof, it will be the worse for him.

How these letters came into my possession is another question altogether. Rightly considered, it is an inquisitive question that does not deserve any answer. It is not for their sakes who attach excessive importance to it that I have had these letters printed.

POSTSCRIPT.

And yet, to be perfectly candid, I must confess that it took me a long, a very long, time before I could determine on giving these Letters to the public.

The assurance that they might prove the salvation of many, and the perdition of a few, did not satisfy me. The case of these latter lay heavily on my mind. I am alluding now to the weak heads and the faint hearts.

To the first, alas! I have no counsel to give; but to the latter, God be praised, I know of one which may be safely depended

upon! It is the compassionate love of the Good Shepherd, in whose bosom perfect peace and safety may be found. Truly, not one soul shall be lost that only cries from the heart, "Lord save me; I perish!"

In firm reliance on this love of Jesus I now send forth the following Letters to the world. That they will cause restlessness and pain to many gives me no concern. On the contrary, it is just my very hope that many hearts may be touched, and be brought to inquire in fear and trembling:

"Ah! what shall we do?"

The answer is given, and is plain:

"*Repent, and believe the Gospel.*"

Nov. 8, 1866.

LETTERS FROM HELL.

CHAPTER I.

I FELT myself to be dying. After a long period of unconsciousness, during which I had raved wildly under the influence of delirium, my senses returned once more. I was so weak that I could move neither hand nor foot; while my eyelids, unable even to sustain their own weight, fell down again as soon as raised, and my tongue clung to the roof of my mouth.

They were standing round my bedside, and I could hear them whispering to one another, "Poor fellow, he does not suffer much!"

But I did suffer: more, far more, than mortal man can imagine! For I plainly felt that I must die. The bare thought of dying had ever been a source of terror to me; but the

dreadful reality of its meaning now burst on me in this hour for the first time. I say in this hour! And yet I lay in this state several days, though indeed they were but one endless hour of agony.

Where was my faith the while? Once I had had one; but that was long, long ago! In vain I tried to recall it, or at least some little portion of it. I had nothing to cling to in my fearful distress. I would have clutched at a straw, but my convulsive, groping hand found nothing to lay hold of—nothing!

Oh, the import of that terrible expression! I know of only one, which is more terrible—"Too late!"

But there was something which I did not grasp at, did not seek after, that forced itself upon me with a marvellous clearness and fulness. It was the life I had led, and which in a few moments more would be closed. The good I had ever done was but little; the evil, oh how great! It stood out before my eyes like a picture. I had lived only for myself, and my own pleasure. Oh, terrible truth! I had been travelling along the broad road of death, not life's narrow path, from the very first. And now I was lying there, the victim of my own folly, utterly miserable; without hope of salvation. My sins stood arrayed

before me, dyed in blood; but it was too late to repent. At that hour, indeed, I had no longer any conception of the meaning of the word repentance. I was the prey of despair.

Not yet fifty years old; in possession of ample means, and to die so soon! It seemed an impossibility; and yet I knew that death was inevitable. It was stealing fast upon me. I felt it in the dusky twilight of my sick room; I saw it in the faces of those who stood by my bedside; I heard it in the deep silence that prevailed. It was a fearful scene! And I, the chief actor in it, lay there; all eyes bent on me; all ears listening eagerly to catch my last gasp. The death chill was already curdling my blood; it was as if I lay entombed alive.

One, one only source of comfort remained. "It will not be worse for you than for many others." Nothing, perhaps, that I could say, is better adapted to depict the utter wretchedness of my state, than this miserable ground of consolation.

But why dwell upon my last struggle? No living soul can realize what my sufferings were. I had Hell within me—nay, Hell was still looming before me! At length, I once more opened my eyes, and saw reflected on the faces of the bystanders the terror that was

visible on my own: one long, deep-drawn sigh, one convulsive shudder, and I was no more!

It was an indescribable feeling that I now experienced. Death was still quivering through my frame, but I felt myself released, freed, lightened. My consciousness, which for one moment had been extinguished, dawned once more the next. Where was I? Thick clouds and mists, a desolate void, hemmed me in on all sides. It was not, however, literally dark; for I could see, though no ray of light fell on my eyeballs. The first sensation I remember to have experienced was an icy chill; it pierced me through and through, till I shuddered again, and my teeth chattered in my head. The second was a feeling of sickness, not of that description which one calls in the world heart-sickness. . . . . Where was I? . . . Involuntarily, the history of the rich man, who awoke to find himself in the place of torment, flashed through my mind. . . . Could I be that rich man? . . . But of him it is said that he pined for one drop of cold water! He must have been parched up, then, with heat, while I literally froze from cold, so that I gnashed my teeth. . . . Yes, there is an allusion to that, too, in another place; it must be true then; and the other, the devour-

ing flame, was true also—terribly true. I was soon to realize it!

Self-consciousness having returned, I perceived that I was naked. Perhaps that was why I felt so terribly cold. At first I thought I was the same—unchanged; but I was only the shadow of what I had been. The eye which saw, the teeth which gnashed, were not really existent, neither was any other part of my body. I was a shadow; stripped bare to the very core of my heart. No wonder, then, that I froze; no wonder that I felt myself naked; and yet with all this no feeling of shame came over me. But I did feel myself to be endlessly wretched. All that manliness in my nature of which I had formerly been so proud, was gone. In the world they call a human being of the most abject description, a beggar. Alas! I was much, much lower. While my funeral doubtless was being celebrated with due pomp and magnificence in the world above, I was making my entrance into Hell; naked, incomparably miserable. While the clergyman, maybe in unctuous words, was touching on my memory, and averring that I "was now beyond the reach of pain and suffering, . . . that Heaven was opened to me;" while, in a word, he was expending all the eulogiums on me which are

customary on such occasions, I was sitting in the midst of Hell's torments.

I went on. Was it the ground that I was standing on? It seemed like a swamp beneath my feet. A wondrous pavement! perhaps it was the good intentions with which Hell is said to be paved.

I went on: on through the fogs and darkness. Far, far off, perhaps it was a thousand miles, I espied a light. I instinctively turned my steps toward it. The fog seemed to lift little by little. Perhaps it was unreal, a mirage; like those phantom castles and houses which emerged here and there out of the hazy atmosphere. Sometimes it appeared as if I went through one of these airy buildings in my blind haste. I saw ghost-like shapes, too; first singly, now in troops. I trembled with fear, though I knew well enough that they were neither more nor less than beings like myself. All at once I found myself surrounded by a troop of them. I fled away in my terror, but only to fall into the hands of another band. I say hands, for they tore and pulled at me, though I did not feel their touch, as they sought in vain to hold me fast. Meantime they kept chattering and gibbering at each other. But, oh! what voices! it sounded in my ears like the faint, smothered creaking

of a rusty wheel. In my fright, I, too, uttered a cry, and heard the same abominable, doleful sound. I could not understand what they were saying, and yet I fancied I could distinguish the words, oft-times repeated, "Whence? . . . what news?" Oh! wretched man that I was, . . . what news could I tell? "Whence" was not the idea that engrossed my thoughts, but "Whither!"

Happily there were other poor wretches on the same road, and under similar circumstances to mine; so whilst the roaming bands were chasing them, I managed to escape. Breathless I dashed along (breathless, I mean, in soul, not in body), till I found a lonely spot, where I could rest awhile and collect my scattered thoughts. Alas, alas! what was there for me to collect, what to counsel about? Was I not lost for ever?

Overwhelmed with grief I sank down, and began to meditate on my wretched condition.

"So . . . I was in the kingdom of death . . . in Hell . . . in torments. Oh, that it should have come to this! Why had I halted between faith and disbelief?—between Heaven and Hell, till the last moment? . . . A few months, aye, a few days back, it would not, perhaps, have been too late to turn, and thus have avoided such a fearful fate. But I had

rushed into it blindly. . . . I had deserved it."

And I felt a certain bitter satisfaction at this last thought: for I detested myself with a burning, implacable hatred, even in the very midst of my self-love, which had been my second nature, and which I had brought with me undiminished in intensity. I could have torn myself into a thousand pieces, when I reflected on the many so-called good intentions which I had never carried out in the days of my life of sin. . . . Had I, then, helped to pave Hell with them?

And there was no sorrow, no remorse mingled with it. I was grieved, crushed; I cursed myself; but I could feel no sorrow. Oh, if I could only do so! . . . I know so well what it is; but the power is gone for ever. And yet with all this hatred of myself, I felt the sincerest sympathy for myself . . . Oh, to have been able to shed only one tear! The rich man in the Gospel sighed after one drop of water. . . . I sighed. . . . Oh! . . . only for one single tear! I had an inward feeling that if I could only weep, I should experience some relief. I writhed in agony; I wasted my strength in convulsive endeavours to try and weep one tear. Just then a voice addressed me, and I started up. It was a young woman,

who was standing before me, holding an infant in her arms.

"O! leave off . . . it is all in vain!" she said softly and earnestly. And yet the expression of tenderness was more in her looks than in her voice. "I have tried myself so often, but all to no purpose. Here no drop of water is ever found . . . no! not even a tear-drop!"

I felt too plainly that she spoke the truth. Once I could have wept, but would not; now I wished to weep, but was unable. She sat down by my side, with her baby on her breast.

Indescribable was the expression of gentleness, mingled with pain, with which she regarded it. It seemed to be newly born, one that had barely seen the light of day.

After a short pause, she turned towards me; but it was no longer with me that she was engrossed, but with her child.

"It is not true," she said; "the child lives. It is not dead! no! it is not dead!—though it does lie so still, with its eyes closed!"

I certainly thought it was dead; but as I did not wish to add to the poor creature's grief, replied, "Yes! I think it is asleep; little children generally sleep so much."

"Yes! . . . yes! . . . it sleeps;" and she began to rock it to and fro on her knee.

"They said I had murdered it," she resumed. . . . "My own child . . . Oh! was it not a mad story?—A mother to kill her own babe!" And she pressed it to her bosom with convulsive energy.

I could endure it no longer, so hurried away. And yet I experienced a certain degree of relief in occupying myself with another's grief than my own. But from the one I could fly away; from the other, flight was impossible.

Still on, ever in the direction of the distant light, as if some magic power attracted me. Well peopled was the land of darkness. Wondrous phantom shapes of endless variety, shadows of persons, shadows of things. There was much to terrify, much to cause pain; and yet gradually I began even to feel myself at home in this accursed state of negative existence.

Gradually I began to gather experience; but I will pass this part of my history by in silence. I will only narrate one circumstance, because it was the first opportunity that presented itself of enabling me to learn what the actual conditions of the place were.

I was standing outside one of those transparent phantom buildings I have alluded to. It was intended to represent a tavern. In the

world above such low places had been far beneath my notice; now everything was on the same level. Apparently, mirth and merriment prevailed inside, accompanied with drinking, card-playing, and dice. It was a hideous mirth those phantom shapes indulged in. One of them, the landlord, I presume, presently beckoned to me to enter. Allured by the fire that blazed cheerily on the hearth, I foolishly obeyed his signal.

"Cannot the man see the door?" he muttered, in a peevish tone.

Taken aback at his remark, I merely replied that I was freezing with cold.

"Blockhead! then why go about naked?" he exclaimed, with a demoniac grin. "Only well-dressed persons enter here!"

I know not how it was, but my thoughts immediately reverted to my old warm dressing-gown, and in an instant I had it on me. And yet it did not cover my nakedness, nor did I feel any warmer than before. I therefore approached closer to the fire; but it did not give out the smallest vestige of warmth, the flame might as well have been a painted representation.

Heartsick, I was beginning to turn away, when one of the guests called to me in a laughing tone, while another handed me a

flagon. A drinker I had never been; my tastes had been in another direction. But now I eagerly seized it, and placed it to my lips to quaff it down. Oh! that sensation of emptiness! that indescribable insipidity! A feeling of faintness came over me, as I sought to quench my burning thirst in gulping draughts of—pure nothingness. It must have been plainly depicted on my face, for they laughed and grinned at me, and said humorous things at my expense. I learnt to bear it. But there was something dreadful in their mirth that cut me to the heart: it was so hollow, so unnatural; not an atom of real merriment underlying it.

The carousing and gambling began again. I sat buried in my own dark thoughts, as I watched this strange scene. At length I summoned up courage to address the landlord.

"What sort of a house is this?" I asked timidly.

"It is mine," was the reply.

Now this was no answer to my question; so, after a pause, I said again, "How has this house . . . all this . . . come to be?"

Some moments elapsed before he deigned to reply, during which he kept regarding me with a strange expression of countenance.

"How has it come to be? . . . Yah! I thought it, blockhead . . . that 's how it came to be!"

A new light burst on me. The house, then, was only a conception.

"Yes, comrade!" exclaimed one of the guests, turning round from the card-table, "here we all are in the land of enchantment, about which there are so many stories in the world. No sooner have we conceived the idea of anything, than it is ours. . . . Hurrah for jollity, I say!" and with a hideous grimace, that betokened anything else than merriment, he rattled the dice on the board.

It was all plain now. The house was unreal; the fire without warmth; the tapers without light; the cards, dice, and strong liquor,—in short, everything, down to the very patch on the landlord's white apron, where the bunch of keys that dangled there had worn a hole, was all unreal.

There was one thing, however, that was real; the terrible instinct that compelled these shadowy beings to carry on in the spirit and in appearance what they had done in the flesh and in real earnest. The landlord to keep a debauched tavern; the guests to gamble, drink, and curse. Though bitter despair is in their hearts, they are impelled to assume an appearance of merriment. It was terrible. Oh!

more than terrible. I looked down at myself. This dress, then, I wore, which was insufficient to hide my nakedness, or give me warmth, was nothing but . . . a conjuring of my fancy. "Away! away!" a voice sounded within me. Oh! that I could fly away! . . . away from myself! . . . . I could but leave my dressing gown behind me, and dash on once again in my nakedness, while a demoniac laughter, like the hoarse distant croaking of frogs, sounded in my ears.

How long my restless spirit rambled on, I cannot say. I experienced many things on my journey; delusions of course; but still I lived through much that was, not useful perhaps, but unfortunately a necessity. The light was my goal. It seemed to grow fainter. Was this, too, a delusion? No, there could be no doubt that it was fading; for now there was nothing but a faint dusky twilight; soon it would be pitchy dark.

I withdrew into myself out of reach of the well-peopled world of death. It is impossible for you, who live on the world above, to comprehend how far a person can withdraw into his own self.

I had sat thus for a long while, crouched up like a toad in a hole, when all at once my attention was aroused by hearing a deep sigh

close to me. I started to my feet, and looked nervously about. There was just sufficient light left to be able to discern the outline of a hideous form, crouching down but a few feet from me, and eyeing me with a stealthy glance. The features were marvellously contracted. A cord was tied round the neck, with one end of which its hands were incessantly playing. Now and then it put a hand up to its throat as if to loosen the noose, by running the fore-finger round its neck underneath the cord. All the while it spoke not a word, but kept staring at me intently, as if the eyes would have started from their very sockets.

"The light is fading fast," I presently remarked, pointing in the direction where a faint glow was still visible; "'t will soon be dark, I suppose."

"Yes," it answered, in a thick tone; "The night is at hand!"

"How long will it last?" I inquired.

"How long?—Maybe a couple of hours, maybe centuries! Of its duration none can form any idea; but long it always is," added the form, with a terrible groan.

"But surely the day will come back once more?"

"Yes; if you call that day, which on earth is named twilight. . . . Lighter than that it

never is here.—I have a strong suspicion that there is no such thing as day. But, after all, what does it matter? But you are a stranger here, surely?"

It was my turn to sigh now, as I answered, "Yes! I died but a short while back!"

"A natural death?" it inquired earnestly.

"Yes! of course!"

My answer did not seem to please the shade, for it made fearful grimaces, and was silent for a long time, while, for my part, I felt no desire to continue the conversation. But presently it began again:

"It is so dreadful to go about with one's life in one's own hands, as I am doing. Never a moment's rest; always on the move. All are bent on taking away my life. You too, you would take it. I can see it in your eyes; but as yet you are too bewildered to entertain any evil purpose. Do you see this rope? It all depends on no one getting hold of the end of it; and, therefore, I never let it go out of my hand. Oh! if any one did get hold of it. Presto! I should be swung up in a twinkling!"

After a long pause, the spirit continued: "Of course it is all illusion on my part, and sheer nonsense. I know that well enough, when I am myself. No one can take away

my life, for the good reason that no one can take what does not exist. But I cannot help it. When this childish nervousness comes over me, I am forced to run as if I had a thousand lives to lose, and Hell were full of murderers."

With a deep sigh, the ghost finished his tale, and loosening the cord round his neck, fell into a deep reverie.

Thus we sat together for a while. But presently, by accident, I chanced to move my arm in the direction of my unfortunate comrade. Thinking, probably, that I was about to seize hold of the end of the rope, he vanished in the twinkling of an eye.

CHAPTER II.

I REMAINED sitting where I was. Soon the darkness quite enveloped me. Soon, do I say? Fool! how know I whether the time was long or short? All I do know is that it fell with an ever-increasing speed and intensity, till, at last, it was pitchy dark. I say now *at last*; before, I said *soon*. Ah! how little capable am I to judge of time.

But what darkness it was! Mortals can form no idea of it. In the world one is used to say, "the darkness is so thick one can almost feel it, or cut it with a knife." Alas! this comparison does not suffice for Hell. There the darkness is so thick and intense that it crushes one down with a weight of hundreds of pounds. It leaves no space to stir in. It hems one in on all sides with an oppressive, though not really tangible, weight. Now I began to realize the meaning of those words, "outermost darkness." Anything more extreme cannot be imagined.

And there I sat, crouched down in the very smallest space, shuddering from cold and fright, —I, who but a little while ago had the whole world before me, and had rejoiced in my strength. I said from cold, but within me was a consuming fire. "Their fire is not quenched; their worm dieth not!" Oh, terrible truth!

The torture of Hell consists in these very opposites. In external cold, howling and gnashing of teeth; and a consuming fire within; a drought compared with which the drought of Sahara must be a cooling refreshment. And then that terror—that nervous feeling! It was one of the first experiences I gathered, and I gathered it unaided. As darkness draws on, the dread of death falls on all the denizens of Hell; and as the former increases in intensity, so does the other, till at last one is ready to expire from sheer fright.

Expire! . . . . An illusion again! No death-struggle is there here, 'tis but a shadowy repetition of it. Oh, the groans and howlings the lost soul then ejaculates! The moans of despair! but they are never heard!

Have you ever known what it is to toss the whole livelong night on your bed, racked with bitter remorse, sad reminiscences, or even with mere sorrow and anxiety for the

future? Know, then, that that is joy supreme compared to what we undergo. And at length you become weary of reproaching yourself. Nature asserted her sway, and, happy mortal, you fell into a refreshing sleep. You forgot all your misery; the acuter your suffering, the deeper was your slumber; and, when you awoke, a new and blessed day had arisen over you, with fresh grace, fresh hopes!

Oh, happy, thrice happy! Yes! such do I rightly term you, whatever be your suffering; however low or miserable your condition in the world. For reflect! The most miserable being on the face of the earth is happy indeed compared with one of us, if he would only take his misfortune at its real value. Yes! wonderful as it may sound, on earth, though it is a world of realities, unhappiness is, to a great extent, imaginary; but here in Hell, though a land of shades and phantoms, it is awfully real. In the world it depends so much on the way in which a man meets his misfortunes. Here, there is only one way of meeting them, the stern, inflexible way of necessity. One does not meet them after all; they are imposed.

Oh, for one moment's slumber, one moment's oblivion! What joy! what blessedness!

Alas! I do but increase my torments. My tears stream down as I write, but they are not of that description that can stain the paper. They fall like drops of molten lead on my soul. Tears did I say? Pooh! believe it not, it was but a figure of speech!

There I sat that long, endless night, death-night I should call it—in distinction to the dark and fearful nights I have passed on earth—for a deathlike chill shuddered through me; while within a fire burned, a fire that can never be quenched. And it had a twofold flame. For the sins I had committed, and the desires I had conceived, glowed hot and fierce within. Which was the most agonizing of the two I am unable to say; only this I know, that they raged as it were by turns, and my thoughts, like a breath of wind, fanned them into flame.

My sins! Of what avail to speak of them now? And yet I must. My sinful life is ended. It lies before me in fearful distinctness, not only as regards its whole career, but in its very minutest parts. That I am, or rather was, a sinner, has not forced itself upon me now for the first time. I have always known it; but with a cunning and address, betokening not so much any adroitness on my side as on the Devil's, I knew how to keep the convic-

tion down, if not quite in subjection, as long as I was alive. I was unable to destroy it entirely, but kept it chained so close a prisoner, that to all intents and purposes it might have been reckoned among the dead; and if ever its voice would make itself heard, it was but as a gentle whisper, to which it was needless to give any heed.

But I could even do more. By degrees I learnt how to cast my sins behind me, and to forget them as completely as if they had never existed.

But now! Oh! now!

This obliviousness was but a juggling devilish trick. They all stand in array before me; not one is wanting! On the contrary, there are many more than ever I would acknowledge in the world. There were a thousand things which I counted as nothing, but which now rise up against me, and condemn me. I can see myself with a clearness, to which I was a stranger before. My whole life is reflected in a mirror, in all its particular and separate parts. A perfect sketch of it traced in the finest and most delicate outline lies before me, no line so faint, no point so diminutive, but that it catches my eye. My tortured soul roams hither and thither, writhing and twisting if haply it can find a place,

however small, where to rest awhile, if only for one instant. But it is in vain!

And yet I have never been what the world would call a bad man. No, no; far from it. Thoroughly selfish, yet not naturally devoid of sympathy; of strong appetites, yet not without refined ideas; of violent passions, but far too well bred to commit myself in any way. Affable, courteous, ready to assist; on the whole, goodhearted, as long as my passions did not blind me; I was not only a general favourite, but I may say was universally esteemed. In short, I was a man of the world. And yet it was far from my intention to let the world use me; on the contrary, it was my firm determination to make use of it. Without faith, without any other object in view save that of the passing hour, I lived for enjoyment alone. Without faith did I say? But that is not quite correct. For, as a child, I possessed an inward, lively faith, but when I came out into the world it could not survive. In the mad career of youth it faded away. At a certain period of my life, indeed, it seemed as if it were about to bud forth again. But when everything else suffered shipwreck, it too was sucked down in the whirl. And yet I could never quite eradicate it. Who knows but that I should have done so had I been

able? Up to my very death, the feeling that I still had somewhat of the religion of childhood lingering within me remained.

I lived, breathed only in my passions. Do you care to know what they were? They were more numerous than I can mention; but the chief of them were, a good table, high play, beautiful women, and piquant adventures.

Oh, how they burn! True, they burnt in the world; but they caused me no pain, or rather it was an exquisite, a voluptuous pain. But now . . ?

If you have any notion of what the dry drought is, you might possibly be able to form a faint idea of my sufferings.

I feel a consuming drought within. I suffer under an incessant internal burning. To be burnt, indeed, at the stake would be pleasure compared to this, because there would be an end to it. But here there is no end! Can you form any idea about it now? It is not, it is true, always equally intense, for that would be against nature. Yet it is but a poor consolation; it is always greater than it is possible to describe.

But let me quit the sufferings I underwent that first night. Strange that I should blush to tell what I have now to narrate. There is a peculiar remorse attached to it, a remorse

which I have to myself alone; but doubtless most of those in Hell would say the same of themselves; but it is a remorse which has never abandoned me a single instant since I have raised my eyes in torment. A whole history is attached to it, but one of those histories that penetrate deeper into the soul than any one would suppose.

I celebrated the anniversary of my thirty-first birthday in a little country inn in a foreign land. I was returning home after an absence of rather more than a year. I had been to the East—in the most unhappy frame of mind it is possible to conceive, broken down with grief and sorrow, and mourning for the loss of a blighted love. We had set out three in number; but two returned; and now we were but a two days' journey from home, when a tremendous storm compelled us to seek shelter in this wretched inn.

But strange things occur in the world! Here, in this very inn, I was destined to meet with the first object that could arouse a feeling of sympathy within me for many months past. It was a ragged boy of some eight or nine years old. His mother, it seemed, had belonged to some circus troupe, and had recently drowned herself in a neighbouring swamp. He was a dirty, ill-mannered, untractable

child, and would not be consoled. He had loved tenderly, passionately, to the exclusion of every other object save one. Had not I? He had lost everything that bound him to earth. So had I! But this was not all. Line by line the child's being spoke to my dullened senses in a marvellous way.

His passionateness; his reserved, timid disposition; yes, even his ungovernable temper, touched a chord in my own heart. It seemed to me that I should have acted just as he did. And yet for all his rags and filth he was a handsome boy. His dark tearful eyes had an expression about them that went straight to the heart; and his thick tangled masses of hair enveloped a face which, without possessing any regular features, was yet in a high degree attractive. His was one of the boyish faces Murillo would have loved to paint. What more need I add, except that the first glance at him made my heart yearn towards him? No one else would have him; so I took him. But had I been obliged to have paid dearly for him, he should not have escaped me.

His mother had been known by the name of Rosalinda: a name, doubtless, assumed in the circus. But the boy knew of none other name. Nothing was found on her person, not a relic

that could throw any light upon the matter. Had any such ever existed it must have been lost with the wretched woman under the dark waters of the morass. In fact the only thing to which any hope of discovering a clue was attached was a mark indelibly tattooed on the boy's right arm. It resembled a swan, and some unintelligible hieroglyphics were attached to it. The boy's name was Martin. He spoke a mixed, impure language of which my own native tongue formed but a minor part.

I took the boy, then, with me; but not without being obliged to use force.

We had left home three in number; and three of us returned. But, O God! what an exchange!

He grew up under my eye, a child without extraction, without a name. No clue as to his origin was ever discovered, but still the lad felt convinced, and the conviction strengthened with his years, that the mark on his right arm would some day or other be the means of clearing up the mystery of his birth.

He had no small ideas of himself. I never allowed him out of my sight. People said I had got a plaything in the pretty child, and perhaps there was some truth in the remark. For the animal nature in him was strong, and

developed itself with astounding precocity, at the expense in a great degree of his moral nature.

Possessed of strong instincts and passions, with a remarkable amount of self-will about him, he was by no means a manageable boy. But it afforded me amusement to irritate and excite them, at one time by letting them have free play; and again, at another, by keeping a tight check upon them. But he was more than a plaything to me; my heart had, indeed, turned towards him, had, in a word, adopted him for its own. Possibly the cause of this was that I hoped to find an exact counterpart of myself in him; or, possibly, it was a mere whim of mine that had brought about this strange connection; one thing, however, was certain, I came to love him: and those persons I have loved in the world, besides myself, might very easily be counted up.

And he returned my affection with a burning, passionate, ungovernable love. If I exasperated him merely to gratify myself, and ended by placing my foot on his neck, when he had defied me in the fiercest terms, he would at last humble himself so deeply, and twine himself round my very knees, so that I have actually had to drag him along through the very dust. At such moments as these he

would willingly have submitted to be trodden under foot, or to suffer any indignity at my hands, provided I would only assure him of my forgiveness, and again take him into favour. But I did not treat him thus: I neither trod him under foot, neither did I ill-treat him in any way. And yet, though the harshest treatment would never have brought a tear to his eye, he would often hang round me, dissolved in tears, as the only being on earth who cared for him. And then the tears would rise up to my own eyes, and we would be friends again. Our attachment towards each other, instead of becoming weakened thereby, actually flourished the more vigorously. Thus matters went on between us; at one time the bitterest, wildest passion; at another, the tenderest, most endearing love, till at last it flashed on me that he was a boy no longer. Soon he grew up into a man like myself, with strong passions, with great self-love.

It was an exceptional case on both sides for us to love each other.

A scene at length occurred between us, worse than any of the former ones. He had offered me defiance on a matter which I could not brook, and I had as good as spurned him from me. How dared the fellow presume to be my rival?

He had left me, smarting from the treatment he had received, but unyielding, breathing out threats that he would never return. And he kept his word. At a subsequent period I received a letter from him, in which he gave me the choice either of making way for him or of losing him for ever, coupled with a threat that he would engage himself in the service of some semi-barbarous state. I made no reply to his *ultimatum*; it was so plainly his duty to humble himself and to give way to me. Time sped swiftly by, and I began really to think that I had lost him. If I were to say I suffered no uneasiness at the thought, I should be giving utterance to a falsehood. Yes, I did feel remorse, anguish, sorrow, for I loved him still; and my heart whispered to me that if he went to ruin I should be his destroyer.

Then I fell ill. It was the first illness I had ever undergone, and it was also my last. On my sick-bed, contrary to all expectations, I received another letter from him. Its meaning was obscure; but the spirit that breathed through it was plain enough. I was more than astounded. He actually acknowledged himself to be in error, and was tractable, mild, and gentle in his expressions, as I had never known him to be before. He prayed for an

interview; he would return "as the lost, repentant son. He had things to communicate which must needs do away with all dissension between us. A higher power had judged between us." He also alluded to *her* in his letter. But his style was so abrupt and confused that it was impossible to decide whether the explanation he had to offer referred to himself or to her.

But he never received any answer to this letter either. I was already too weak to write, and I could not trust any one else to do it for me. Fool that I was, I fondly hoped to be myself again in a day or two.

What explanations had he to offer? What was the cause of this wonderful change in him? Was it himself or her he referred to?

These questions tortured me till the time when I drew my last breath. Perhaps they hastened my end. They followed me to Hell, and torment me more than aught else; for other matters at times slip out of my thoughts; but this question, "What did he want with me?" never leaves me. It burns like a firebrand on my soul. And that it resolved itself into many other such questions as these: "Did it refer to him or to her? How had it fared with him, spurned by the only being who had ever shown him any love? Was I the cause

of his ruin ?" did not make the pain one whit the less.

Oh, woe, woe! These questions are a Hell in themselves.

CHAPTER III.

How long I sat buried as it were in myself and darkness, how long this night of perdition lasted, I cannot say. Even if there could be any mention of time in Hell, there is naught whereby to measure it. It may have been years, or it may only have been hours. But one thing is certain, I lived over again that night the whole of my wretched earthly career.

Can you realize my meaning?

At last the dawn began to re-appear, but so slowly I cannot describe it. Little by little the darkness became less dense; a faint light glimmered through it; imperceptibly it increased in brightness, till at length I was able to discern the objects around. This time of expectation, if I may so term it, was the least painful I have yet experienced in Hell; for a shadow of oblivion fell on me while I was craving for the returning light. And what blessing greater than oblivion here? I said light! But, alas, it is never light here! Neither

is there such a thing as oblivion! It was but a fond imagination.

But it cheered me up, and put fresh power into me. Then I gathered myself up and set off again in the direction of the rising dawn. How long, and how far I went, has nothing to do with it; suffice it to say, I was soon enough in the middle of Hell's misery, and had found my proper place. Then again might I rest myself awhile. Rest! Once for all I must beg you not to be misled by such foolish expressions, which the force of old habit makes me employ. For of course there can be no such thing really as rest here.

It is wonderful how quickly I found out my proper position; how quickly I adapted myself to the conditions of the place. Instinctively I did as the others did, acting all the while in accordance with my own peculiar individuality. Thus I contributed my part to make Hell a shadowy and distorted image of the world above. I could not have acted otherwise than I did, even had I felt convinced that it was to my infamy and disgrace.

For every one feels an irresistible impulse to carry out the same sinful predilections he had in the world. And every one can obtain what he desires. He has only to conceive the idea, and lo! he is in possession of the reality.

Thus passions and lusts are as prevalent here as ever they were in the world, only far more frightful.

In the world their hideousness was concealed under a fair outside covering of the flesh; but here they are arrayed like skeletons, bidding defiance to all nature in their carnal lusts, desiring everything they ever have desired, but in reality attaining nothing except to grin at each other. All here is hollow and empty, devoid of truthfulness and reality, incapable of affording satisfaction. It is just in this very thing our torture consists: in the compulsion to surround ourselves with this essence of vanity; in the obligation to devote ourselves to this empty unreality. And, however lively our convictions may be that all is void, all is vain; however great the repugnance we feel, we must bow and bend ourselves to it; we are forced without cessation to strive to become what we have been before.

If a number of spirits unite in the wish, "Here shall be a town," it is accomplished. Every one co-operates in the work, according to the impulses of his individual entity, and the town is built.

Or is it a church they desire, or a theatre, or a promenade; a forest, or a lake; or a mountain range, the wish is realized at once.

And not only does each individual see what his own vanity has produced, but it is patent to every one else. And yet they are naught but shadows altogether. Nay, even this expression has too much reality—they are mere imaginations.

There is never any lack of subservient spirits to place all this phantom-work upon the stage.

If any one wishes to build himself a palace and keep a magnificent establishment, he can have the choice amongst unfaithful stewards, thievish butlers, and deceitful servants in abundance. It might be supposed that there would be found but few willing to undertake such subordinate positions; such, however; is not the case; habits brought down from the world above decide the matter.

Or should any one have a desire to raise an army (provided, of course, that he has commanded one previously, for without reputation the attempt would be a signal failure), he will find numbers of braggadocios and bloodthirsty vagabonds, who are fit for nothing else. Or should his tastes lie in the direction of a harem, he will find an incredible number of obliging females, both with and without the title of lost women. And so on to infinity.

After these explanatory remarks you will

not be surprised to hear that I still reside as formerly at my tasteful villa on the banks of ——, that I keep up a fine establishment, and live at a high rate.

As of old, I am wedded to society, with all its visible and secret charms. Indeed, few persons have had such an intimate acquaintance with this source of enjoyment as myself, or have made the use of it I have done. But now—I do not say pity me, my friend, for your sympathy could do me no good—but I only say you have here the misery of Hell pourtrayed in these few words, "I will take my fill of pleasure, I will revel in enjoyment as of old, and yet experience no sense of pleasure, no feeling of enjoyment." Is it not folly? But such, such alas, is the case!

I have found many acquaintances, and a fair number of friends, but no greetings have passed between us yet. I have not yet forgotten how fine the feeling of the world is. It would be wrong to lay the blame on the poor families; besides, it could give them no pleasure.

However great saints those who have departed may be accounted in the world above, they will not find the pains of Hell to be less real.

Dare I venture upon a description of Hell? Is it capable of being described? I almost

doubt it; but still I will do my best to give you a sketch.

Of course Hell has its geography. "What its extent?" No one can say. Infinity is the only answer that can be given. If one could take earth, sun, moon, and all the planets together, they would not nearly fill Hell. Yet, what am I saying? Space here is as little capable of measurement as time.

"And Hell's boundaries?"

On one side only can there be said to be a boundary, and that at an immense distance off, even to a spirit's conception. Whether any one has ever yet actually reached it, I cannot say; I only know that a boundary does exist. On every other side none has ever been discovered.

In the direction of the glimmering light there is a tremendous abyss, separating Paradise from the place of torment.

On yonder side, therefore, is Paradise, and it is thence that the light issues. At stated, and doubtless at regular intervals, the gloom rises up from it; and as it increases in intensity, the light gradually wanes, till total darkness sets in. This is our night! Then the abyss becomes as it were a burning mass, but the flames give no light. It is Satan's corner, the abode of the damned. It makes me shudder to speak of it.

After a while the gloom again sinks down little by little, and the light becomes once more apparent, growing stronger and brighter, till it has reached its culminating point in a hazy, but wondrously soft twilight. Then suddenly the misty shroud bursts asunder, and the light streams forth in overwhelming streams. Hell is at first blinded with the glare, and stricken to the heart, as it presently beholds, on yonder side the pit, Paradise unfolding itself in all its wondrous splendour and inconceivable majesty to the vision of the damned. Nay, not so! We are not yet damned, but rather let me say, to the languishing gaze of the tormented. And not only can one see into Paradise (for nothing is hidden), but the blessed spirits of the dear departed ones also.

I have not yet experienced what I have now forced myself to describe; but I am proceeding with the growing dawn to meet that hour —that hour of blessedness or of woe.

How long the light is increasing, how long it is waning, I have as little idea as I have of the length of our night. Perhaps it is measured by hours, perhaps by years; but the bright effulgence of Paradise lasts but a fleeting moment, though to many its duration may be bitterly long. Shall I meet that hour with joy or dread?

A dark, slimy river winds its way through-

out the whole extent of Hell. You think, perhaps, of Lethe. Alas! no, my friend; it is no such Lethe, a draught from whose waters can produce oblivion. Lethe is but a fable, while this is a hideous reality. It has its source in the world above; all the lies and wickedness of earth float down on its current. Maybe that is why its water is so black and slimy: often it resembles congealed blood. At irregular intervals it swells and overflows its banks, when some monstrous falsehood or crime is hatched in the world above; then its waters pour over its banks, leaving behind them a putrid mass of pestiferous mud. The stench is scarcely bearable; but we, hardy spirits that we are, can bear all things!

To the best of my recollection, I have already alluded to the suffocating nausea we suffer from continually. It is not surprising.

All the vanity of the world descends direct to Hell, and forms an atmosphere around us. The greater the amount, the thicker the atmosphere, and the more oppressive the feeling of nausea. If one could only vomit! But that is impossible. Otherwise, one would vomit up the world, which fills one to repletion; one would vomit up one's own self, and thus the torments of Hell would come to an end. You see I am a logician still. Alas, God help me!

Sometimes we have rain and snow! It is when follies and vanities accumulate to a more than ordinary degree in the world, (and it can endure a large amount of them; it is its nature,) and it can bear no more; then the surplus falls down into Hell, and, according to an old custom, it is said to rain or snow.

Not only do events observe a certain chronological, but also a political order here. Neither are the sympathies quite excluded. Generations dwell here as it were in layers or strata; those spirits that belong to the same age usually herding together. But still, race, and the development of civilization, make themselves apparent even here. The last arrivals naturally occupy the outermost places, but as fresh crowds are ever pressing on, the first-comers draw back. Of course, there are many exceptions to these rules. Those who have followed out the same lines of thought, and the same pursuits, naturally flock together here, though they may have belonged to different races of people, and to periods widely remote.

Frequently, also, these persons compose a whole by themselves, who had formed an exclusive social circle in the world above, or belonged to certain definite periods. Thus, there is a "City of Unrighteousness," called also the

"City of Politicians;" a "Town of the Holy Inquisition;" a "City of the Jews;" of "the Mormons," "Sodomites," "Pre-Noachians," &c. Hell thus, in a great measure, assumes the appearance of a colonized land. Inclination and caprice, I should add, play as great a part here as in the world above.

Gradually I have learnt to know the laws that prevail here. They are as simple as they are natural. Desire and remorse keep the whole in motion. I was nearly substituting repentance, but that is a word of whose meaning we know nothing. Our torment is of a twofold nature, but the result is only one. Some have to follow after the same lusts and desires which they followed on earth, and yet never be satisfied; or practise the same evil deeds as of old, but with ineffable disgust and aversion to themselves.

The covetous man, for instance, can think of nothing but his gold still; the unclean man only of his uncleanness; the gluttonous man only of his appetite; the murderer only of his foul bloody deed. Others, again, are constrained to follow after those very things which they neglected in the world, and are tormented with a longing to make good and to restore, knowing all the while that it is in vain. The unrighteous man thinks only of

repairing his unrighteous deeds; the unmerciful only of exercising mercy; the unnatural mother's thoughts are now centred on her poor children; while the self-murderer's sole anxiety is now to save his life.

All are compelled either to do as they did on earth, but ought not to have done; to aim after those things that once were their aim, but unlawfully so. Or inversely, to do those things they left undone on earth, but ought to have performed; or to follow after those which they wilfully omitted, but ought to have followed after.

But the sufferings of Hell must not be regarded in the light of a punishment. Punishment is yet impending; first comes the Judgment. No, it is but the direct consequence of our life on earth. Ye that are still alive, think, I pray you, on these things. Everything, be it ever so small, has consequences attached to it, which extend far, far beyond the boundaries of an earthly life into the very depths of Hell: of the kingdom of Heaven I can say nothing. If then the simple consequences are so fearful, what must the punishment itself be?

The law then, the fearful fundamental law that obtains in Hell, is, that we are not tormented, but that we torment ourselves. But

notice the point from which everything issues, and on which finally everything depends, namely, whether we have lived in the faith of God's Son, who once gave Himself for us. Our iniquities weigh down the scale in proportion as they have stood in the way of our faith, or have testified against it. Do not be surprised that I name the name of God. Alas, He is still our God! And in the same way I name the name of God's Son. We know that God has a Son, who once came into the world to save sinners, and that He loved the lost sheep unto death, even the death of the cross. But, for all that, we know naught of salvation, or redemption; all is forgotten, even to the Saviour's very name. We often waste our strength in agonizing endeavours to recall, if it were only a particle of it. But all in vain; not even His name. Oh, if we could only remember that name, and be able to pronounce it, then we should be saved indeed! I do not doubt it for an instant. But woe, woe! It is too late!

On the whole, what I have forgotten is enormous. I might well say I have forgotten everything except myself. Yes, I speak correctly, for I have not forgotten myself. On the contrary, I remember everything connected with my life with a degree of precision

as painful as it is wonderful. But what was once, as it were, attached to my being has disappeared. Intelligence, accomplishments, talents, with all the other ornaments of Mammon and the flesh, have disappeared together. It is not so wonderful then that this feeling of nakedness is so vividly impressed on me.

Yes, only myself remains. And when I inquire of what this individuality of mine consists, I find only burning remorse that can never be quenched; ardent desires that can never be satisfied; a foolish longing after what is lost, and can never be found; an immeasurable amount of recollections, small and great, which are bitter and painful in the mass.

There you have me exactly as I am, O God, my God, in the torments of Hell!

CHAPTER IV.

I WAS not brought up under the most happy conditions. My parents were an ill-matched, ill-assorted pair. Indeed, it was a very general remark among people, "that it was a wonder they ever could have married." My father was a plain, simple-minded man, retiring and unpretentious in his manner. He was the head of a very renowned mercantile and manufacturing firm; but, for all this, to outward appearance, he seemed a very unimportant personage.

As far back as I can remember, my mother, who was the most important of the two in my eyes, was, in every sense of the word, a lady. She was strikingly beautiful, and retained her good looks for a very long time. Possibly the reason of this was that she had been a stranger to any great passions. Some people, indeed, called her cold and apathetic, and there was doubtless some truth in the remark; but they would have committed a great error had they

said she had no will of her own, or was devoid of energy. For though the former never certainly showed itself in any repulsive manner, I do not believe it had ever been bent. Who, indeed, could have bent it, when I her only, her darling child, was powerless to do so. And she was just as clever as she was decided and firm.

She was universally admired; I cannot say beloved. Perhaps no one really loved her but myself! Did I love my mother? If I were to give a truthful answer to this question, I should have to own that I too admired her more than I loved her. And well did she deserve this admiration. Much as I have seen of the world, I have never met with any other woman who so entirely came up to my ideas of what a lady ought to be. She was perfection realized; perfect in beauty; perfect in manner, carriage, and bearing; perfect in dress; perfect in all the customs of the world perfect in the due discharge of her duties; and perfect in her conduct, in Christian piety and devotion.

In all things she was a model for imitation; free from spot or stain. She never gave offence; never said, or did, or sanctioned anything that was not right.

In fine, I might say that my mother was

perfect even to the very minutest fold of her dress. And she enjoyed this reputation to a ripe old age; and even then her pretty looks were loth to leave her.

When I look back, I can see her, as I can see everything else, far more clearly than I could then. It is no longer a secret to me that she was greatly influenced by the world. The world was her pattern, and this was why she had developed herself to such perfection.

I do not mean to imply by this that she was anyways deficient in her appreciation of religion, or of her higher duties. On the contrary, I venture to say few persons have kept God's commandments so closely before their eyes.

She honoured the clergy; the church was, as it were, a second home to her; no one ever left her without being satisfied one way or another. Duty and propriety walked hand in hand by her side through the whole of her life.

Our house was, as it were, divided into two. In one my mother was at home, in the other my father. Thus they were like two circles that barely touch each other. I did not stand midway between the two, but as my mother's petted darling belonged to the higher circle, I seldom came in contact with my father.

His quiet, serious nature, his calm, searching look, made me shun him. Neither did he take much notice of me, though I doubt not but that I was really dear to him.

My mother's circle was a refined one; she was fond of gaiety. My father, however, seldom took any part in it; and whenever he did I could not help feeling rather ashamed of him. For, though master of the house, he was extremely simple and retiring in his manner. Indeed, the greater part of his time was spent in the counting-house, the factory, or the warehouse.

My aunt on my father's side was the very reverse of my mother. She was an old maid, eccentric in character, and composed of anomalies, infirmities, and peculiarities. In all respects save one she was not to be relied on, and she was constantly over-stepping the mark in all directions. She was overstrained, capricious, and was always committing herself. A lady, properly speaking, she was not, but at times the whim would seize her to act the part of one. It was, however, merely an assumed character, one which she quickly abandoned. And yet, with all this, she was natural to a rare degree; her heart was ever on her lips. She was extremely *naïve*, and her manner of talking so droll, that she was, as she herself

said, the only one who could enliven my serious, quiet father. And this was a duty she faithfully accomplished. Aunt Betty was far from being perfection. In the eyes of the world, which, by the way, but seldom caught a glimpse of her, she was, to use a mild expression, considered to be a queer sort of person. She only possessed one thing in perfection; and that was a heart, streaming over with love, prepared for any sacrifice; a heart whose nature and privilege it was to deny itself to promote the happiness of other people. On herself she never bestowed a thought. And her heart was full of a faith as deep, as lively, as simple, as a little child's. Of course she had her ups and downs in life; but her heart was always in its right place. And God dwelt in her heart. At times she often got into great confusion about her duties, and ran amuck of the commandments; but for all that the great commandment always stood out clearly before her eyes, containing in itself all the other commandments, and all the duties of life—"Love God; Love one another."

She had never been separated from my father from earliest childhood. Now she managed the household; for it was a large house, and possessed, as it were, two *ménages*.

If I were to compare her with Cinderella,

the simile, though not strictly correct, would still contain a good deal of truth. For while in domestic affairs her sway was acknowledged she was still everybody's servant. All the troubles and annoyances fell to her lot; she wore herself out for the house. But it was entirely her own doing; for if any one ever remonstrated she would become quite refractory, though usually of such a mild, amiable disposition. My lady-like mother never put finger to anything; to my aunt was entrusted the care of the whole establishment, of my father included. In a word, she was virtually mistress. To try and economize, to work, and to worry herself, were among the least of the burdens she had to endure; for she felt herself called on to bear the sorrows, pains, and troubles of the whole family. She took the blame of everything, and voluntarily made herself a scape-goat for the omissions and commissions of everybody else. All this she looked upon as the part assigned to her to fulfill in the world. She it was who acted as mediator between my parents, surpassing all of us in cleverness by her great simplicity. In truth, she formed a most important connecting link between them. But it was principally to my father she dedicated herself, hanging to him with a tenderness so touching

that words fail me to describe it. How well she understood how to make his comfortless home comfortable; to keep all vexations out of sight, and they were not few; to cheer him up with a merry speech which often came from a sad heart, in order to bridge over the wide space that lay between him and his wife —aye, and his child!

And how she loved me! Kind, good soul! My mother petted me, I will not say actually spoiled me; for she was too prudent to do that. But I have to thank my aunt for having been a good and pious child, notwithstanding all my indulgences. It was on her knee I learnt my first lesson in holy things; and it took root within, as nothing good ever did afterwards. Yes, the memory of those days is inexpressibly sweet to me, spite of all the bitterness of Hell. The attractive power of her love was so great that I would often slink away from my mother's handsome apartments, where I was lord and master, to pass my time with my aunt as a poor child, either in the kitchen, or in the little room she called her own. They were the happiest days I have ever passed.

Thus I received a sound religious education, but I did not owe it to my mother, though she was pious, too, after a fashion. But it did not strengthen with my growth. I grew up with

strong sensual passions, and at an early age I got a taste of the world.

Aunt Betty died; she had literally worn herself out: affection is often a costly thing. Her death made a strong impression on me for the time, but it did not last long.

I was already engaged in the business of the office. My mother had made up her mind that I should follow a military, or, if possible, a diplomatic career. In good looks I took after her; wealth I should inherit from my father, and in other respects I was by no means deficient. She was proud of me, and wished to see me distinguish myself in the world. But though my father had almost entirely given me over to my mother's care, on this point his mind was made up. I was to follow his profession, and become a steady business man.

And he was right. I had the gift of fascinating every one, a dangerous gift forsooth for persons of a nature like mine. Not only did I find the world ready to embrace me, but it literally dragged me to its arms, as the nymphs did Hylas. Thus I was ruined before the down on my cheek had begun to curl. Bad friends I had in numbers, but those of the other sex were by far the most dangerous. A time of compensation, however, came; from being the seduced I soon became the seducer.

After I came more under my father's eye there was no lack of warnings, reproofs, and admonitions on his side. But it was of no use. I avoided him, and deceived him. But my mother had far greater influence with me. On the one hand, she made me feel that she was yielding enough to make excuses, and to pretend to be blind to my follies; while on the other she knew well how to represent the necessity of prudence and propriety in such colours as to make me promise to amend; and I actually did amend at her suggestions. I curtailed my excesses, and was careful not to create a scandal. At first the restraint was irksome, for I revelled in brutish lusts and passions; but if these latter were strong, my will was strong enough to tame them, and my mother's clever way of dealing with me made me will.

My father died when I was about twenty years old. He had never been seen to smile since Aunt Betty's death, for there was no one any longer in the world to make him cheerful!

I was taken into partnership when still very young, under the guidance of my father's brother, and shortly afterwards was attacked by a severe illness.

And now I am approaching one of the

darkest portions of my life. It is in truth but a little matter, dashed off hastily like a pencil sketch on a pleasure trip, but for all that it contains the germ of the bitterest remorse I suffer from. If in all other respects I could be washed clean, that dark spot would still remain.

When I became convalescent I was extremely weak and feeble. It was in the early part of the summer. The doctors recommended a trip into the country; but I had no desire to repair to our country seat, for I was capricious and peevish to a degree. Perfect repose and quiet were ordered, and certainly they were not to be found there. A capricious whim accidentally decided the matter. During the former summer we had made an excursion to the sea-side; and I brought before my mind a very small house, situated in the middle of a forest, so retired and still that it seemed as if Peace itself had taken up its dwelling there amidst those cool shadows of roses, ivy, and clustering honeysuckle. It belonged to some forester. If I went into the country at all, I would go there, and nowhere else.

After a great many objections had been raised, the matter was at length arranged, and we set out. The old forester was living alone

with a daughter who was just emerging into womanhood.

Anna! Little did I dream that this name would ever ring so terribly in my ears!

I regained my strength, but began to get tired of the place, pretty though it was; so to relieve the *ennui* from which I suffered I began to make love to Anna. She was little more than a farmer's daughter, but extremely graceful and unconstrained in manner and appearance. It seemed as if her whole being was in harmony with the surrounding landscape. Like the wood in whose midst she lived she was all freshness and sweet perfume. Nature could not possibly have presented anything more attractive to me than this young maid, so unrestrained, I might almost say wild, and yet so opposite to everything coarse or vulgar. We spent the greater part of our time in each other's company, for her father looked on her but as a child still, though she was just seventeen years old.

She it was who waited on me. But all the fine things with which I honoured her were lost on her. Light-footed as a deer, easily moved to laughter, she was not to be readily caught. She took care not to come too near me, not that she was afraid of any danger, for she suspected none; but like every free and open

nature she shunned bonds and snares. Her thoughts were far removed from what is termed love. She was contented in herself, and supremely happy; her life was as joyous as a bird's, or as a butterfly's among the flowers. I have never known a disposition so thoroughly joyous, nor a nature so animated as hers. Sunshine or rain, she would sing under the open heaven; she tripped, as it were, through the world.

But in a devilish mood I said to myself, "Wait awhile, my little one; I will see if I cannot tame you."

I did not fall in love with her, our respective positions were too widely apart from each other for that. But my passions became keenly aroused, and gradually she grew more and more attractive to me.

And at last I succeeded in taming her, after having had recourse to numberless artifices. So thoroughly did I succeed that no one would have recognised her.

She faded away like a wild flower whose stalk has been crushed, or like a bird whose wing has been broken.

Her merry, ringing laugh was silent now; her dauntless bearing was no longer to be seen. Quietly and sorrowfully, with downcast look and averted gaze, she slunk about. But

with a tenderness that had no match, with an affection that possessed no bounds, she now literally clung to me—me, her destroyer.

She knew that I had taken away her very life. Lost as she was she loved me still, though I it was who had been her ruin.

Then remorse began to fix its sharp talons into my heart. For I could not but feel affected at the display of so much real love. I was not utterly bad then.

And if she had been charming before, she was not the less so now.

It is true she was not the same person, but there was an enchantment in the transformation she had undergone. Formerly so free, so wild, like one whose neck has never bowed to the yoke; and now humbled, and crushed like one who still even kisses the chains that bind him.

I reciprocated her love, or at least I fancied I loved her. And I began to think seriously about marrying.

But it was otherwise decided. My prudent, careful mother, got wind of it, and took upon herself the task of bringing me to reason. She began by pointing out the folly of such a step in a manner by no means calculated to exasperate, but none the less powerful. There was no ridicule in her words, but still she

made me feel that the whole affair was perfectly laughable. She did not seek to thwart my plans, but taught me gradually to regard them from another point of view. If I had ever really loved Anna, doubtless, I should not have given way. But the scales fell from my eyes: I did not love her: I only felt sorry for her.

To this point my mother would constantly revert; and then little by little began to divert my attention—not to speak of my desires—into another channel.

She had taken a little child into the house, some distant, orphan relative. She was born in America, and was now about nine or ten years of age. Up to this time I had scarcely ever noticed her. But now passing allusions were constantly being made of her surpassing beauty; and at last she gave me plainly to understand "that in seven or eight years' time Lili would be one of the loveliest women, and one of the best matches in the world, and would, therefore, be sought after by hundreds. If I would only agree to dismiss Anna from my thoughts, and direct them towards Lili, she would not only promote my views, but would actually keep her for me. Of course, I should not marry her till she was grown up; meanwhile I might travel the world round

without being able to find a bride to compare with Lili."

Yes! it was all true. My imaginative powers came into play, and from that day forth I occupied myself a great deal with the little fatherless Creole.

Lili was, undoubtedly, a pretty child. I could form a very good opinion of what she would be, and my passions were accordingly aroused. Artless child that she was, she, of course, could not minister to them. But I derived a certain degree of enjoyment from her even now; even before I was aware of it I was won over to my mother's scheme.

There was something extremely exciting in these peculiar circumstances. To guard Lili for my very own, without her having the smallest idea of it herself; to watch her budding charms gradually developing themselves for me; to mould her according to my wishes; to see treasure upon treasure accumulate within her, till the time of enjoying all these had come. Call it unnatural if you please, but it was enchantment to such a nature as mine. You understand me, selfishness is an ogre, that devours everything around it without becoming satisfied, or even one whit the fatter. But I was more than selfish. There was the demon of lust within;

and however natural in other respects demons may be, they always find their greatest delight in acting contrary to nature.

I gave my mother free liberty to arrange matters about Anna in a becoming manner; and from that day I kept my promise, and never set eyes on her again.

Was it not a great sacrifice on my part? I feel it to have been so now!

CHAPTER V.

I AM beginning to feel myself at home—yes, at home! Sweetly and pleasantly as that word falls upon the ear above, in Hell it has a frightful sound. But Hell remains Hell whether we use the word home or not, and in Hell we must remain. The fact is we are compelled to feel ourselves at home.

This irresistible impulse of vainly imitating what we did on earth; of passing and of pursuing a shadowy existence with an actual desire in the heart; in this consists the "daily bread" of our torment in Hell, if I may use such a term. Yes! desire is a full reality; it is ever the same, though the bodily senses are dead. This it is that makes it so branded within, that it burns like a glowing flame. Our state here is not badly sketched in the fables of Tantalus and Sisyphus. In Hell nothing exists save desire alone, and everything is vain and fruitless. Truly is the saying exemplified here: "Vanity of vanities."

All is illusion, and yet what a terrible reality!

I have accordingly resumed my former manner of life, not from pleasure, but from compulsion, with an inward feeling of loathing and disgust. Meanwhile I have got on very well in the circle in which for the time I am placed; I have renewed many old acquaintances, besides forming several new ones, which I should not have cared to do when in the world. How astonished you would be if I were to be so indiscreet as to mention names. For not only are there several respectable persons to be found here, but they actually form the greater proportion, just as they did in the world. There is no mistaking them. I refer to those who think only of attending to their own affairs, and of eating their bread in peace and quiet, caring for naught else, utterly regardless of that higher calling which makes all the children of one Father, and unites them in one family.

Only look around you. They throng about you, but pay no heed to you. They busy themselves, these men and women, in their public and private pursuits, in their domestic life, in their housekeeping and daily affairs. Few people have any idea that in the hubbub of daily life two of the most dangerous traps

are laid for them. Some drag themselves through life; others dawdle through it; and this they call "to live." And then suddenly it is ended, and they close their eyes, to open them again in torment.

Oh! if I had but one year of my life over again (and I am not thinking of myself alone), possibly I might be the means of saving some of those respectable individuals, fathers of families, and others, from inevitable destruction, whose thoughts never rise above their office desk, their dinner table, or their bed; and some of those exemplary housewives, too, and mothers of families whose ideas are concentrated in their saucepans or washing tubs. I say, possibly, because I know too well that in most houses doors and hearts would be shut against me.

Regarding the so-called benefactors of humanity, I have noticed one remarkable fact, that some of them (I say, some) have actually benefited hundreds of their fellow-beings, and have only been enemies to their own selves. But if you are wise, and would preserve your soul, beware of attaching any importance to the world's praise, of whatever nature it be. Like a worthless packet by express post, it will hurry you on to certain ruin.

But I must recollect where I am. I have

nothing more to do with the world. The multitudes I have alluded to above come into the torments of Hell without ever having been guilty of any gross crime. In the world it will be said (if only for the sake of the nice expression), "What a crying sin!" They felt themselves so secure, because they were unconscious of having committed any crime; and in this consciousness they discovered the fulness of righteousness. And yet, for all that, they have gone to Hell; though the greater number of them come here without any dominant passion within. "What a crying sin!" But their misery is equally great. Their punishment, indeed, consists in their having nothing to do, no avocations, no business, in which they can employ themselves. But if they have no passions, they have habits. And is there not a saying, "Old habits bite best?" In other words, habits are just as biting as passions. It is quite certain that if restlessness and weariness could kill people, and it were possible to die here, the greater proportion of Hell's denizens would die from sheer *ennui*, and Hell would be deserted.

After having been duly introduced, I live a very sociable life. You are astonished, perhaps, at my using the word "introduced," but without reason; for ought we to be quite

ignorant of good breeding and manners here? There is no art in going to Hell; but it is quite a different thing to be presentable in Hell. It is just the same as in the world, only with this difference: *there*, it depends on what a man is; *here*, on what he has been. In the world I was a handsome, agreeable, refined man, of large means. I am not that now, but I pretend to be. Do not think there is any trick in this; it is pure nature—purer than any house of correction in the world could render it.

At first, I was much bored with visits and invitations. Novelty is as much sought after here as in the world. If I had only brought with me a few of its silly, genteel fashions, I should have been heartily welcomed. But without wishing to say a word in my own praise, I brought nothing with me save a fashionable existence of a most vapid description. Shall I give you an account of a luxurious and festive party I attended recently? They had shown me the honour of inviting me, in company with some of the greatest *gourmands* and drinkers the world ever knew. Truly, an unmerited honour! I have never been the one nor the other; on the contrary, have always adhered to that golden rule, "*Est modus in rebus.*" With a profusion almost un-

precedented, there was everything to tantalize the appetite and tickle the palate. And to judge by the witty remarks and obscene jokes that were bandied about, it went off very well. There was everything to tempt; but enjoyment was wanting! Prithee let me be silent on that score. Nothing was real at this banquet except inflamed passions; the guests had nothing else to consume save their own selves.

Our meat and drink consisted of an indescribable feeling of nothingness; in every mouthful, in every glass we raised to our lips, we felt ourselves inwardly consumed. And as for the jokes, they were merely old, stale, musty sayings, hashed up again in a variety of ways, rather calculated to produce disgust than merriment.

That person is not to be found in Hell who can give utterance to a really refreshing, amusing witticism. Meanwhile we were obliged to eat and drink, laugh and chat away as merrily as we could.

We were obliged, do you understand? If so, you have some idea what a banquet in Hell is.

Or shall I go further, and describe one of our orgies to you? I say *our*, but it is a rarity that I ever attend one of them. For they are more horrible in character than I can describe, and you know I lay great stress on

decorum; so on those grounds I will not enter into details, but will only remark that the presence of the weaker sex by no means enhances one's enjoyment, but only increases the pain. Those empty kisses! those shadowy embraces! —Faugh! let me pass them by in silence!

Whilst I was sitting at one of those sumptuous boards where nothing that luxury could supply was wanting, I could not but reflect on the condition of the peasant, the poor half-starved peasant, who has to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. Oh! but that wretched crust with which he appeases his craving hunger, that weak thin beer with which he slakes his thirst, forms a banquet, indeed, to which ours bears no comparison. If only to have something real to bite with the teeth, something real to swallow, whatever the drink may be—what a pleasure!

Is it not that incomparable hero Achilles, who, in the shades below, gives utterance to the remark, "that he would rather be the most miserable day-labourer on earth than a king or a hero without an equal in the lower world?" It is but heathenish wisdom, yet how true! For my part, I would ten thousand times be the most abject slave; be crushed and bowed down by every sorrow, hard labour, and misery conceivable, than fill the highest

post, or the most respectable position, in Hell.

Of all the countless fools the world rears, none are greater than those who take away their own life, on the plea that it is impossible for them to be worse off than they are at present. Oh! but however great their worldly sufferings may be, they can still be far more miserable. They will long after the old condition, even though it had been the most wretched. Only offer them one ten times more wretched still; ten times more abject, and they would jump at it. If it were possible for you to do so, they would call you their saviour, and would eternally bless you.

There are but few, however, who carry folly to such a pitch as to lay violent hands on themselves. The greater number (and their number is legion) content themselves with giving vent to sighs and groans, by wearing sour and miserable faces, and thus shorten their days. Their shortening their life would not matter much, if they only made it better. But unfortunately, they do the very reverse, they kill and waste the remainder of their days in ceaseless discontent. They are discontented with themselves; with the world; with the very air they breathe; the ground they walk on; the light that falls on their eyes.

And why are they dissatisfied? Because forsooth their health is not quite so good in some respects as could be desired; because the world occasionally goes against them; or because their position in life does not quite harmonize with their views and tastes; or because others are better off than themselves; or because they have had greater struggles to contend against than other people; or because life has been a grand mistake, and their fondest hopes and aspirations have suffered shipwreck.

I do not say that all this is nothing. On the contrary, life is full of hardships to most persons, to many it overflows with them. But this I do say. If you who are wasting away your time in discontent, could only look on matters from this place, you would find that however interwoven your earthly lot may be with sorrows, affliction, and misery, there is yet a bright side to it. So much depends on the way in which a person meets anything. If instead of staring till you are dazed at your misfortunes, disowning them as it were, you were to make them part and parcel of yourself, were to use them as a powerful incentive to action, how totally different your lot would appear to you. Many a misfortune is a misfortune only in imagination; under proper treatment it disperses.

And many an actual misfortune can often implant the germ of new aspirations, and thus lay the foundation of a better and a happier life. Yes, if you could only view things from this place, it would at once be evident to you that a man (an able man naturally) can bear a very great deal, can reconcile himself to many a misfortune, loss, and trouble, and still be a happy man. You would find that each day, even of such a life as that you are leading now, was a precious, a costly thing; a gift from Heaven, for which it were impossible to be sufficiently grateful. You would understand how my soul longs to be in your place; how fortunate I should prize myself, if I could only occupy the position of the most wretched being among you all.

It is all clear to me now; but 'tis too late! too late!

That we worry ourselves with stiff and elegant parties, just as of old, is a natural consequence. Drawing-room life occupies no small portion of our existence. But if this description of "high life" used to be hollow, and killing work before, imagine what it is now, where hollowness and death are presupposed. When I reflect upon it, I cannot conceive how ever I could have made such a victim of myself to the world. It is exactly

as if some evil, malicious spirit were at the bottom of it all. As if it dragged some twenty to fifty persons by the roots of the hair (who for the most part would have been very comfortable and happy at home—persons, who, generally speaking, do not even know one another), and shut them all up together in a brilliantly lighted suite of apartments. And that is called a party!.. Doubtless, the spirit enjoys the fun immensely, but the poor victims are ready to die of *ennui* and weariness, the while. At last when the spirit has amused himself enough for once, the enchantment is over. The company separates; the lights are put out! After the long and unnatural constraint, people come to their senses once again. Host and hostess say from their heart, "Thank God, it is all over!" While their guests ejaculate just as heartily, "So glad to get home again!"

I said just now, I could not conceive how ever I could have victimized myself for such formalities. But here it is quite a different matter. The constraint imposed on us here is far greater, ten times more terrible, than any spirit, however malicious, could impose.

Well! We go into society just as of old. Here, as there, the great aim is to show oneself; to act a part, and above all to bore one-

self to death by attention to *etiquette*. Here also, as there, it is our aim to wear a pleasing exterior, and to say pleasant things. And yet there is a great, a radical difference, which makes our position as painful as it is wonderful. For in Hell one sees not only through the external garb, but into the very soul. So when a person says with a smiling face, "How delighted I am to see you! how very fortunate to meet you here!" and thinks at the same time, "Shall I quarrel with the old witch again?" the party addressed reads all one's thoughts, as plainly as she hears the words. But we soon learn to arrive at a certain degree of *nonchalance*, or recklessness in such matters, otherwise all intercourse amongst us would be unbearable. At the moment I am talking, doubtless, the advantage is on the lady's side; but directly she opens her mouth it is on mine; for I can read her thoughts as plainly as she can mine. We are quits!

But there is one very disagreeable circumstance connected with it; it is a confounded obstacle to all flirtations. It would be an impossibility to carry on an intrigue with a woman here, even if her virtue were rather frail. All the compliments of the world could not cozen her. Therefore, in one respect, we are a very virtuous set. Above all there is

great difficulty in getting flattery and compliments to take. Our hearts are our deceivers, in a different sense though to what they were in the world.

On the whole it is utterly impossible to form any idea of the number of surprising events that take place here each day. Viewed from this place the world appears as a land of dreams and imagination, but none the less lovely and desirable. Anomalous as it may seem, here where everything is unreal, reality for the first time appears naked and unvarnished. Whether it be friends or enemies that meet, they quickly arrive at a mutual understanding, seldom, by the way, of a very agreeable nature.

Would you like to hear an instance or two? The following are culled from the most recent annals of gossip:

A. had been shot in a duel in which he was engaged in order to wipe out an insult that had been offered to his young and devoted wife. To his great astonishment he met his late antagonist a few days ago, who had also gone the way of all flesh, and come to Hell.

In a fit of exasperation he went up to him, but was met by the other with the utmost *sang-froid*.

"Fool! are you going to fly into another

passion, and for nothing too? Away with it —let us be friends!"

"For nothing!" hissed out A. "Was it nothing that you insulted my wife, and then took my life, when I stood forth to defend her?"

"I will tell you the truth," was the reply. "You take a wrong view of the matter entirely. It stands simply as follows: I was your wife's lover, but did not wish to be so any longer. That was the insult! Then she set you on against me. I say again, away with it—let us be friends!"

Whether they ever became friends I cannot say; but I only know that this piece of information cooled A.'s blood.

* * * *

Two cousins were sitting together in confidential conversation. They were Germans.

"Yes! I was born a poet!" said one of them. "I wrote romances, and my first works made a tremendous sensation."

"True! Perhaps I know more about it than any one else," answered his cousin. "It was I who wrote the reviews in the papers and journals! It was I who brought you into notoriety, my dear Coz! Such things are easily managed in our beloved fatherland, if one only has a few connections, and just enough wit so as to avoid being tedious."

"What do you mean?—you?—I am sure I am extremely obliged to you. You must indeed have taken a deal of trouble."

"Yes, indeed, I did," answered his cousin. "The trouble was exactly proportionate to the love I bore you. Have we not been like brothers ever since we were little children?"

Cousin number one thereupon became thoughtful. After a long pause he resumed:

"Yes, indeed, I was uncommonly fortunate. I became really quite the rage, and saw brilliant prospects before me. But all at once a change took place, which I never could account for. The reviews suddenly became so bitter and cutting, that I could no longer find a publisher, and after several fruitless and abortive attempts was obliged to come down a peg or two."

"I can explain that too, to your entire satisfaction," answered his companion. "I tore you to pieces in the paper; I made you the object of a formal persecution; directly you gave utterance to a line, I was down upon you, so that at last you had to give it up."

"How?—You?"

"Yes; it is quite true! But of course I did it for the best. Your beloved mother, who had also been a mother to me, charged me with her

last breath to do all in my power to arrest your future progress along the road to ruin, on which you had already set out. You had no poetical talents; on the contrary, you were exactly cut out for a butter merchant, a business which had been in your family for generations, and which was a very lucrative one. I saw it at once; it was all stuff about your literary fame. I had blown the bladder full, it is true, but I could not keep it inflated. In everything you wrote the wind kept escaping between the lines. Certainly you met your fate half way. Then I set to work. In the interest of poetic art, of butter dealing, and of your own, I summoned all my talents and sarcasm to crush you to the ground as often as you appeared in print; and my endeavours were crowned with the most signal success. Your family grew proud of you; and you became a respectable butter merchant, burgher, and a patriot!"

"And am in Hell," interrupted the unfortunate poet, rather peevishly; "but should I ever have come here had the road to Parnassus not been so shamefully blocked against me?"

"Well, that is a question, certainly," answered his cousin quietly. "But of this I am quite convinced, that poetry was as little likely to gain you admission into Paradise, as that butter is the cause of your being in

Hell. But come, are we not like brothers? I meant it all for the best. What I did, I would not have done for any one else."

But the poetical butter dealer turned angrily away; he had heard more than he could digest all at once.

* * * *

"Nay, what, you here, my dear fellow?" exclaimed a fat, pudgy little man, embracing a conspicuous-looking fop who had advanced to meet him. "I am glad and yet grieved to see you here. You were the only one who stood by me in my trouble. When I had lost everything all my friends deserted me; but you, you alone stuck to me."

"Not everything, my dear friend," was the mild answer. "You are making too much of it—not everything. You had your wife left you still."

* * * *

Two monks were sitting together engaged in earnest conversation.

"But tell me," said the one, "tell me, dear brother, how it was that you came to go into a cloister?"

"The answer is very simple,—through my own stupid folly. I fell desperately in love with Lisella Neri, of our town; you may perhaps remember her. She was reputed to

be a great beauty, and an excellent match; but as I could not get her, and in fact no one else, I got disgusted with life, and entered a cloister; and I have repented it ever since. That is my simple tale. But what made you go into a cloister?"

"A very different reason to yours," was the reply. "I, too, had a hankering after Lisella, was accepted, and became the unhappiest husband under the sun. Lisella was the most capricious and ill-tempered little vixen in the world, and she did not care a pin for me. I never had a moment's peace. So at last I jumped at the only loop-hole open to me. I left her all I possessed, and entered a cloister, and have never repented doing so; for if ever I did feel at all discontented with my lot, I had only to think of Lisella, and my ill-humour vanished at once."

After this piece of information the first monk remained a little while buried in deep thought.

"Well, I can make nothing out of it," at length he said, "except that no man can avoid his destiny. As far as I can see, I should have entered a cloister whatever had happened. But you, brother, became the happier of the two—not by Lisella, the pretty witch,—but by the sad experience she taught you."

But enough of this. I wonder how I can tell such tales. If you think it affords me any pleasure to do so, you are very much mistaken. Amusement in Hell is always connected with the bitterest pain.

Martin, poor Martin, what has become of thee? Truly he suffered a great wrong. Badly brought up, badly managed, he was my work.

She was a pretty little girl, just about his age. I made her acquaintance as she was scouring a staircase. Menial though her occupation was, she still presented a most attractive spectacle to the eye of a connoisseur. I question whether she could possibly have appeared to greater advantage under any circumstances whatsoever. The exertion which set her young blood and limbs in motion; her *negligée* style of dress and manner; on the whole the entire absence of restraint about her, set her off wonderfully. I snatched her away from the humiliating position, to which her nature was little adapted, and placed her in a respectable family, where she could be properly clothed and educated.

Naïve and simple though she was, she seemed to understand that I did not do all this for nothing. But she was still rather too unpolished for me, and I knew how to wait.

How ever Martin and she got acquainted I cannot make out; but the first sight seems to have decided it. Simultaneously, as if by an electric spark, the flame was kindled in both their hearts, and a mutual understanding was the speedy result.

Martin openly acknowledged his attachment to me. I ought to have regarded it, but I did not. Stung to the quick, I hated him fiercely for what he had done. Then he left me in anger. Just as determined as I should have been, he never reflected for a moment on the results, but carried off the girl under my very eyes.

She was not to be found anywhere; but he did not hide himself, but defiantly presented himself before me. Then I drove him from my house, and as I thought from my heart. But I was deceived; no, not from my heart.

What could he have had to communicate that would smooth matters between us? Did it refer to himself or to her?

"A higher power had judged between us!"

These enigmas are enough to drive one wild.

Many riddles, but only one question; and this one burns like a brand into my soul, and gives me insufferable agony. Possibly it may cause my ghost to revisit the earth.

But would my question be answered then?

CHAPTER VI.

Let me give you a description of Lili. But I foresee that my description of her as a child cannot quite exclude my description of her as a woman. And I must add that I see her now before me as she was at a far later date. Then I did not see her, did not know her, though I anatomized her with my eyes. But it was a mere carnal look then! What so blind as passion?

She was a Creole. Her features were delicate, finely traced, though not classically regular; her soft hair was of a lustrous black; her eyes, like twin stars, of so deep a blue that they appeared almost to be black, veiled over by long silken eyelashes in the most fascinating manner. Her figure was light, graceful, perfectly symmetrical, and well filled out, while her hands and feet were of the most exquisite shape. Such, in short, was Lili. Perhaps her eyes were the loveliest feature she possessed. Ah, they gaze into my very soul even

now! Never, to all eternity, shall I forget the melting glances of her bright eyes, half tears, half smiles; despondent, and yet so full of promise! They never failed to touch my heart.

A Creole girl is generally thought to be passionate, wayward, and capricious. Nothing, however, was further from Lili's nature than either of these qualities. It is true she was of an ardent temperament; but it possessed a glow so mild, so fervent; not issuing forth in passionate outbursts, but rather dissolving itself within in genial warmth. Where the right, or truthfulness, or love demanded it of her, her will was firm as a rock. In all else she was docility itself. Utterly unselfish herself, affection was the law, the necessity of her being. Poor child! No greater misfortune could have befallen her than to meet with one, who was made up of pure selfishness and of naught else.

She was, as it were, all heart. At a more mature age a physician pronounced the organization of her heart to be defective; some said it was too large. And I can well believe it, for I never knew a heart so easily moved as hers. Affection was the sole thing she longed after. It often needed but one kind word, aye, or even one kind look, to make her

fall on my neck, and nestle to my bosom. Her heart would burn within her at almost anything. The trials and sufferings of mankind, their fortunes and misfortunes, their joys and sorrows, she made the one object of her study. Sympathy was her life and breath.

I could not but think sometimes that she was not made to live in the world.

It will, therefore, be readily understood that a girl with a nature such as hers would often feel herself repulsed and wounded in her intercourse with her fellows, would feel like a stranger among them.

On that account she kept mostly by herself, or with me, wretched being that I am. Hence it was that her nature was simple to a degree, but not of that stamp that marks the fool, but which is rather the characteristic of true genius. I am convinced that if she had ever become old and grey-headed, she would have retained the child within her. Nothing was easier than to make her believe anything, provided it did not offend her fine moral sense. It never occurred to her that anybody could impose upon her. Once or twice I did so, but never more. I bitterly repented it. Shameless impudence would even have stepped aside for her holy innocence. She was one of those choice

natures to which the scum of the world seemed as if it could not adhere. I dare almost say that she could have passed through the lowest depths of sin and infamy without receiving the least taint. It never occurred to her to believe evil of any one. Her eyes were never opened to the truth that it was an evil world in which we live. Sin she knew to exist; in her childish nature she had the deepest consciousness of its existence. But as to vice, she never knew anything of it as long as her foot trod the earth.

I should be doing myself injustice if I were to say I felt all this now for the first time. No. I felt it then, bad as I was. But I must again sigh, "What a match, she and I!" It was sheer spirit against the flesh. Poor Lili!

Of knowledge she possessed but little, if the number of subjects be taken into account. History was her favourite study, for it told her about human beings; their toils and labours, their fortunes and sorrows; otherwise it was a dead language to her. In mechanical accomplishments she was therefore deficient; indeed, it was a fruitless task to try and teach her even a foreign language. Naturally, therefore, where her feelings had so much play, she became thoughtful and dreamy, though we did our best to drive it out of her. But it

is always a thankless task to work against nature. She was not reserved though; for to me at least she confided the inmost thoughts of her soul.

The sacred narrative, of all others, was her favourite study. From it her spirit drew its first nourishment; and the impression she received was deep indeed.

"God who loved lost creatures to death, even the death of the cross." Nothing ever moved her at a later period so much as this affection and this suffering. Over and over again she would read it; an angel must have counted the tears she shed over its pages. Though unlike the Magdalene, in all else she resembled her in her burning love towards the Crucified One.

At a later period the history of the Crusades formed an epoch in her life. The Crucified was her first love, the Crusades her first enthusiasm. In a few weeks she seemed to have become years older, so powerfully had the idea possessed her. Henceforth the Holy Land, where God's Son had lived and suffered, became the darling object of her aspirations. On one or two occasions she betrayed her thoughts, to her lasting sorrow; for her young friends nicknamed her "The Crusader," and whenever they met her, even though they did not speak a word, they would cross their fingers

significantly at her. It was a terrible and expressive pantomime!

Thus, in a measure, the Saviour's cross had become her cross. She was deeply wounded at their coarse jests, and from that time never once alluded to the Holy Land. But, doubtless, her heart thought the more about it, though her lips were silent. I say perhaps, for circumstances at a later period made me suspect that such was the case, though I could not be quite certain.

Is it not true, then, that she did not seem to be formed for the world, at least not for my world?

If I had not been the wretch I was, a mere glance at her would have confirmed my opinion. Lovely, pure as an angel; though all her loveliness was as nothing when compared with the beauty of her mind. During my whole life beauty and pleasure were the only things that had any attraction for me. But never have I known anything more ravishing than the perfect attachment of that childlike heart, in which no drop of impure blood, no grain of falsehood, no shadow of selfishness, harboured. Never have I experienced anything so captivating as her angelic tenderness, so devoid of cloud, so free from reserve, so forgetful of self, so unassuming, that

regarded itself as poor and mean, and yet acted as if it had a thousand lives and a thousand blessings to bestow.

It was impossible to be quite uninfluenced by the hallowed powers that dwelt within her; at times indeed, especially when she could no longer be looked on as a child, the influence they exerted on me was very powerful. But, and I must confess it, I regarded her from the very first with unhallowed looks. I had hurriedly entered into my mother's plans, and not only did I watch over the pretty child, but I literally brooded over her. Already I regarded her as mine, and calculated in advance what she would bring me in in the course of time. She was not difficult to win, and I won her completely. Whenever I wished, she would lie in my arms, stretch out her little cheek to be kissed, and leave her sweet tiny hand in mine.

Thus a couple of years fled away, when my mother deemed it prudent to interpose.

"It will not do," she said, "you are enjoying your future in advance, and will ruin it. She will become developed far too early, if things go on thus. You must be separated for a time. Travel; remain away for a few years. Meanwhile I will educate Lili for your happiness and joy. Travel, my son; some day you will thank me for this advice."

I felt she was right, that it was absolutely necessary; and I constrained myself to follow her advice, in the interests of prudence, or rather of a gross passion. A short time previously it had been decided on sending one of the partners abroad; and as my uncle, who was head of the firm, could not go, and as my cousin, who was second partner, had a great disinclination to leave home at that time, I announced my readiness to travel, at my mother's urgent request. And I set out. They had to tear the weeping girl from my embrace. But, though much moved myself, I consoled myself with the thought, "we shall meet again, my little bride, and then I shall have gained more than you have lost now."

My sojourn abroad lasted longer than I had anticipated, but at length the time came when I could return. During my absence I had received frequent letters from home, and from Lili too.

Wonderful letters! They seemed as if they were penned by an angel's hand. And, although these ethereal communications—let me style them—were somewhat strange and foreign to my nature, still they made a deep impression on me. I felt an indescribable, though I fear not a holy delight at being able to say, "This blessed, innocent

child is mine; and it is I who will make her some day feel that she too is flesh and blood, a child of the world."

At last I returned home, and saw her once more. Oh! enchantment! My expectations were more than surpassed. There she stood before me, graceful and slender in figure, incomparably lovely, with a soft blush diffused over her cheeks, her eyes modestly cast downwards, and her young bosom gently heaving with emotion. She was just then on the threshold of womanhood, scarce yet fifteen years old. The instant I pronounced her name, she raised her eyes to mine, and fixed on me a gaze so beaming over with happy love, that it went to my heart. It was but one look, yet it told volumes. The next moment she was clasped to my bosom.

Shall I call it a happy period that now ensued? If it was, neither was it without pain. When I saw Lili before me, it was just as if I were reading her letters again, and yet the feeling of enjoyment was far, far greater. Still there was no gratification in it, as I began to feel each day of my intercourse with her. Her aspirations were as widely remote from mine as heaven is from earth; and I felt this to be the case even when I embraced her in my arms and called her my own. The same

child as before, but more developed; affectionate as ever, and yet this very affectionateness caused me anguish; for, what was truth and reality to her, to me was mere vanity. Her love and mine, therefore, were two very different things.

Thus we continued to live together for a while, when my prudent mother again interfered:

"She must have time and opportunity given her for development, otherwise her fine and delicate nature would be injuriously forced. Moreover, from living in such close and daily intercourse with her, she would learn to regard me as a brother, and that was surely not my wish. I had better live apart and not be too prodigal of my visits. At the same time there was no reason why I should not make myself as agreeable and necessary to her as I pleased. But I must promise her that I would not breathe a word about love till she had completed her seventeenth year."

On this point my mother was determined, so I gave her my word, and moved into lodgings. On the whole, I perceived that it was to my advantage, and felt satisfied with the change. Lili was very backward, and my presence evidently did not conduce to her progress. As for myself it was as if I could get

a better view of her now, and I found her twice as lovely as ever. I noticed also that her manner towards me began to be different. No longer a child, she would blush up to her eyes whenever she saw me; and I had, therefore, to be very careful in my intercourse with her, and the precaution proved of real benefit to me, though not the less a trial, and that a severe one, notwithstanding that it was rich in blessings.

I made inquiries about Anna. Her father had long since been dead, and nobody knew what had become of her. Very likely my mother knew, but I could never bring myself to question her; so I cast the recollection away from me, and Lili's presence unconsciously helped me to do so.

But soon I had other things to harass me.

Lili was evidently drooping. She had just arrived at that critical time when the woman in her rebelled against the childish nature, and was making every exertion to usurp its place. But her constitution was too weak and frail for the struggle. So it was arranged that we should spend the winter in the south for the benefit of her health, and for my diversion.

Lili had grown very thoughtful, and often indulged in reveries. It was not unnatural; and never had she appeared so charming than

when endeavouring to solve the great enigma of life. But, when taken in connection with other circumstances, this was considered to be rather an alarming symptom.

"Her system required to be gently, and yet fully re-invigorated," such was the advice the physicians gave.

So we set out, early in the autumn, mother, Lili and I.

And here the bright period of my life may be said to have begun, with only just enough of darkness in it as is necessary to the existence of shade. Lili's state disturbed me but little; passion caused me but a transitory pain. A period of about a year passed, I will not say quite free from spot or blemish, but without my having anything to reproach myself for; in short, it was Elysium! And now . . . I am in Hell!

We were so happy together! My mother naturally was amiability itself. I, at least, was on my good behaviour, while Lili literally revelled in the freedom of her manner of life, which brought with it so many and such varied enjoyments. With increasing confidence she would now hold up her lovely head, would cast her beaming gaze over the beauties of the world with greater freedom; physically and mentally her beauty developed itself in a

marvellous manner. One single half-year had produced a great change in her. Womanhood had budded forth in the first radiance of youth, fresh and pure as a rose, bejewelled with the early dews of morning. And, at the same time, a change had taken place in her manner towards me. Though tender and affectionate as ever, there was a maidenly reserve about her. No longer the little one who had hitherto lived in that which was external to herself, she now found a life within, immeasurably rich and lovely. We approached each other more on equal terms.

Equal, did I say? Yet she far surpassed me in the rich endowments of heart and soul. In a very short time, she gained a wonderful power and influence over me. Gladly I submitted to the yoke; there was a pleasure in it more ennobling, more delightful, than anything I had ever felt. She raised me, as it were, above myself without my knowledge. New feelings, new interests and pursuits, were beginning to bud within me, and it dawned upon me with an ever-increasing clearness that there was something in the world of greater worth and nobility than selfish love and selfish pleasures. Day by day my nature became ennobled and purified from contact with hers. I was on the road to become a good, pious, and loveable

man, or rather, let me say in one word, a man.

Her eyes had opened themselves wide to the beauty of the world, a beauty of a very different nature to that which I had ever known; and, by degrees, I, too, came to see with them. But her gaze and her aspirations were directed upwards. Earth could not rivet them. It was as if she saw Heaven opened above her; and, can you believe it, she took me with her in her heavenly flight, heavily laden though I was in the flesh? What power, what might, in a being so frail and delicate! But it cost her no exertion. She drew me with her: in her I forgot aught else. I listened to the words that fell from her lips as attentively as if she had been some prophetess predicting for me countless blessings, and was transported away from earth. An entirely new world, a spiritual world, opened itself to my enraptured gaze; even life eternal, that consummation of bliss, began to dawn upon me. How many ennobling hours can I recall, that I passed with her.

My God! what recollections! and oh! what torture!

I began to be actually ashamed of myself when I reflected on what I had been. That love which I had felt so long for Lili—love, in-

deed it was! but what a love! It would have terrified her had she had the least inkling of it. But she never got to know it. True, there were moments when the old ravening nature made itself felt within; when dizzy with passion, I was well-nigh losing my self-control. At such times I would madly press her to my bosom, and embrace her with the glowing ardour of passion; or else cast myself down before her, clasp her knees, or kiss her feet while the hot, burning tears rained down upon them. Then she would be terrified at my violence, and would press her hand upon her heart, as if her spirit were passing away. But she did not understand it; the meaning of it all was far remote from her chaste mind. In her innocence, she only felt the sincerest compassion for me, only thought to soothe me. She would call me by the most endearing names, would let her tears flow with mine—two streams, forsooth, of a widely different nature—the one turbid and muddy, the other bright and pure as crystal. And the power of her innocence never failed to recall me to my senses. The promise I had made my mother flashed again across my mind, and, though it cost me much, I still found strength in the thought that soon, very soon, the temptation would be over. And then, when the

paroxysm was passed, the same happy blessed days returned.

I think I have now explained the relations that existed between us. There was a wild beast within, but she had tamed it.

It was spring once more, and we were beginning to think of rètracing our steps homewards. Lili had on one or two occasions suffered from rather alarming symptoms, which the physicians—half charlatans—of that country called "oppression of the heart." At that time we were on one of the Ionian Isles. But we would not allow it to disturb us; for Lili had of late grown stronger, and had become more lovely than ever, as she now stood forth in the full bloom of youth. We were too happy in her, too secure in our joy.

But as we began to talk of bending our steps homewards, a strange restlessness took possession of her. I sought, of course, to learn the cause, and found to my surprise that there was a yearning desire of her heart yet unsatisfied, of older date and of a different character to mine. Suddenly the whim of her childhood—a visit to the Holy Land—had returned. Or had it ever left her? Had it not only been lulled to sleep for a little while? Probably so. She begged, she entreated me not to return till I had let her see the Holy

Land, however short and hasty our visit might be. "Unless she did this, she would never have a moment's peace; but only let her get there through my help, and she would eternally bless me."

I could not but regard it as a fanciful idea, though, at the same time, it was impossible to help admiring the steadfastness with which she had clung to it from her very childhood. Aye! not only did I admire it, but I felt myself so moved that I determined to use all my influence in order to promote her wishes. Had she even asked for anything still more unreasonable, I could not have withstood her entreaties; for it seemed as if her very life lay in my hands when she besought me so earnestly.

I spoke to my mother about it. She reluctantly gave her consent, and this last little trip was decided upon. It would only occupy a few weeks, we thought, and so we set out. That look with which she thanked me, that soft, angelic look, brimming over with love, still burns in my heart, and will burn there till the judgment day. Thenceforth a heavenly peace was diffused over her whole being. Her restlessness was gone now, for her joy was complete.

But a few words more, and my narrative is ended. Why should I pain myself by

telling more? it is greater than I can bear already.

We had set foot on the Holy Land. I made Lili enter it as a princess, while I was but her chief servant. But she had no princely thoughts about her; she entered it as a lowly pilgrim. We spent some weeks in running about from place to place. Lili was suffering more than we suspected; but she could not rest. Her malady was a dangerous heart disease, and already serious symptoms were showing themselves. How blind we had been! I say we, for perhaps it had not escaped my mother's quick eye.

An unlucky combination of circumstances caused it to break out in a sudden and alarming manner. In a cloister at Bethlehem, where we had to crave admittance, she breathed her last, a few days only before she would have completed her seventeenth year. She had passed away with an angel's hallowed smile upon her lips; the goal of her life was reached. Her earthly career had been but a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

In her, death had lost all its terrors. She lay as one transfigured; pale and more lovely in a higher sense than a worldly one, with her hands folded meekly over her breast; a breast wherein the world had never found a resting-place.

You will scarcely believe it when I tell you that even in her last hours, when I saw for a certainty that she was lost to me, she raised me up with her far above the level of perishable things. And I felt myself so comforted, as if this earthly life were a thing of naught, as if I should ere long meet her in a better place, where sorrow, tears, and suffering are no more, and where death and partings are unknown.

Oh! what a conception!

Her last words—and they sounded so soft, so spiritual, just as if they came from another world—were thanks and blessings:

"Thanks, Otto! I am so happy. . . God bless you. . ."

I was very nearly losing my composure through my emotion; but I had an inward feeling that in a little while I could have conquered all pains.

In one hallowed kiss I received her last breath.

But scarcely was the breath gone out of her than I came to myself again, and the old brutal nature re-appeared once more. I had but one thought, "What had I lost in her! what a treasure of beauty and grace! what a consummation of enjoyment! And so close to my happiness, too; but a few days more and

she had been mine." I raged like a wild beast whose prey has been snatched away from it. She had escaped me!

This, then, was the fruits of my self-denial for years and years; of the many sacrifices I had made; of the forbearance I had shown. In her I had year by year treasured up my all, and had lost it in a single moment.

And yet was it not better that she should have escaped the miserable fate she would have met with in my arms?

O Lili, Lili! . . . I think I could even rejoice at it . . . if I were not in Hell!

My mother mourned also, but never lost her composure; it was mostly for my sake she grieved. So we returned home, after having buried Lili in the Holy Land.

She rests beneath a sycamore, not far from the place where her Saviour was born.

It was on our return home from this journey that I met with and adopted the boy Martin. Sad remembrance!

So I became the man I was to remain. I gave myself up to the world; lived only for my own enjoyment; loved only myself, with the exception, perhaps, of my mother and my adopted son. I say, perhaps; for I dare not positively assert that I really did love them. I was called a Christian, but was not one.

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True, I was not of the number of those who make a mock at holy things, for after Lili's death nothing was longer holy to me. Now and then childish thoughts from bygone days tried to assert their influence, but I was afraid of them, and thrust them hastily aside each time. In a word, I believed in what is termed Christianity only just so far as it suited my views, and my faith gradually dwindled away.

My mother began to look old; but increasing years seemed to have no influence over her. She continued to be beautiful, always the perfect lady, ever an object of universal admiration. Always of a pious disposition, she now became very religious, and sought to make me so too. But her powers did not extend so far as that. She could not get me to do more than observe Christian rites and ceremonies. For my own sake I maintained a decorous manner in all my dissipations.

And now I have done! It has cost me much to complete these confessions. Do not think it gives me any satisfaction to do so; still it seems to have lightened a heavy burden, and that is always something.

CHAPTER VII.

THE light waxes slowly stronger. The highest point it ever reaches is but a clear twilight; and then the splendour of Paradise is at hand, though still far distant. Time passes as it may, in sorrow, regret, and suffering. You must not think that because I am able to interest you, I can in any way interest myself. Alas! it is only a delusion, as everything else here in Hell is. Time passes on, true enough; but brings no relief with it. In the world there was always this consolation, "there will be an end to it;" but here—and that is the terrible thing—here there never will be an end. Among the minor things on which I used to set great store was to gain admission as a bachelor to ladies' tea and coffee parties. There was something unusually attractive to me in the slander and gossip that was bandied to and fro at them. Of course on such occasions I used to look as innocent as possible for fear of spoiling the fun.

I still feel the same interest, still follow it up. Of course there is pain attached to it; everything is painful in Hell.

Well, tea and coffee parties, slander of course included, abound here. In the world we used to denominate anything that was very weak and diluted as "tea wash." But the weakest "tea wash" in the world is a strong drink compared with the tea and coffee poured out at these parties. Neither has slander lost anything by its long passage here; on the contrary, the tongue knows no restraint.

Propriety and decorum too are totally disregarded. Nothing too bad, too shameful, too secret, but it is dragged forth by these sisters of slander when once they have warmed to the work. They seem inspired; the one surpassing the other in venomous fabrication and scandal. But there is one remarkable circumstance, that when once these good ladies have done their best at backbiting others, they begin involuntarily to speak against themselves. It is no use striving against it; they are compelled to unfold the secrets of their own lives, however private, however disgraceful they may be. To see how the other dear creatures enjoy it; how they wink at one another, bite their lips, and nearly go out of their senses for joy. But their enjoyment

lasts only up to a certain point; that is, till it comes to their turn to speak; then they, too, against their will, give the others a full and ample revenge.

I have just come from one of these parties, and feel in the humour to give you one or two characteristic anecdotes.

The lady who was talking, though young no longer, had very pretty features. Perhaps a taste not so nice as mine would have pronounced her beautiful. The experiences of life often leave behind a very lovely impress on the faces both of men and women; but with the greater number, especially with women, it assumes an expression of bold impudence which is never pleasing. The speaker was one of this description.

"Really, my dear friends," she began, in an affected voice, "we ought not to speak ill of our neighbours. I believe there is a commandment expressly forbidding it. But as you have asked me about that strange couple that just passed, something, by the way, like a bulldog mated with a crane, I will tell you in a few words what I know about them.

"The man, then, was one of the most devoted l'hombre players in the world. Even on his death-bed he would insist on having his game of l'hombre.

"'Pass!' he ejaculated, and drew his last breath. Whether the points were ever settled I cannot say; but this I do know, that his widow was so deeply moved at it, that she gave the servant a sound box on the ear, because she did not walk softly enough to please her. Evil tongues very likely said that she was so afraid lest her poor dear man might waken up again.

"But there was no fear of that; he was really dead, and remained dead and was buried. On his tombstone was placed the following simple but expressive epitaph:

"'J. J. P.

"'HE SHUFFLED THROUGH LIFE!'

"I shall never forget the day of the funeral. We were at our country seat, a few miles from town.

"'Dear A——,' I said to my husband, 'don't you think you ought to follow poor P—— to the grave?'

"After a few growls he allowed that, perhaps, he ought to do so. So it was arranged that he should go to town the next morning.

"Now, I knew very well, whenever my husband went to town, he never returned home till the following morning. It was a little diversion for him. I suppose he went to his

club; and I am sure I never found any fault with him for it. Husbands are not now what they should be.

"Well, I got the dear fellow to take a note for me, and made him promise to deliver it directly he got into town. I had a friend living there, I should tell you, who, by the way, was no friend of my husband's. He was a distant cousin of mine, but my husband, oddly enough, disapproved of his visits to our house. A very grievous fault in him! But my cousin liked it, and I liked it, and so it was rather difficult to prevent our meeting whenever an opportunity occurred. Whether it is part of a cousin's duty, I cannot say, but, anyhow, he took upon himself the office of teaching me how to love. So neglected, indeed, had my education been in this respect, that even in my nineteenth year I did not actually know what love meant. My husband could not teach me; he was too old and awkward. But with my cousin it was a very different matter. But let me hasten to assure you, on my honour, that our relations with each other were of the most innocent and harmless nature conceivable; we had scarce passed the introductory stage.

"Well, my husband set out with the letter to my *lady* friend, who, of course, was none

other but this cousin. I thought it such a capital joke that he, dear man, should be the bearer of the letter. Enough, then, when I tell you that my husband spent the evening at his club; and that I was not alone! Next morning, when he returned home, the house looked just as usual.

"'Anything occurred during my absence?' he inquired as usual.

"It was all I could do to keep from laughing.

"'No, love! there was not a soul here the whole day!'"

Hell is naturally full of loose characters; both of those who openly ply their trade, and those who are outwardly respectable individuals. The first-named class swarm on the outskirts of inhabited places, where they follow their old pursuits. But the latter occupy their places in society, in order to cater for scandal, a matter of the last importance in Hell. I mean thereby that they not only may thus be able to recount their own scandalous histories, but constantly be giving rise to new ones of the most varied and attractive character.

Who does not recall the history of Mars and Venus in Vulcan's net? It is acted over and over again every day. But the shame

which these women made light of before, now becomes their constant torment. For modesty and respectability are now the sole objects of their ambition. But all in vain! They are a defenceless prey to vice under its numerous and indefinite forms.

I do not intend to moralize—it would not do in Hell; but I must draw your attention for a moment to the essential difference that exists between these two classes of women. And it does not at all redound to the credit of those who in the world escaped the opprobrious epithet, and the disgrace attached to it. Want and wretchedness for the most part made the others what they are; they fell victims to a hard and cruel necessity. The first but followed the bent of their inclinations. There was nothing to compel them to follow their calling; on the contrary, everything to render it expedient for them to remain virtuous. It is, therefore, a natural consequence that they are under far worse conditions in Hell than the others.

The above tale drew forth universal applause from the company; everybody began to whisper and titter, while a diabolical expression of joy gleamed forth from all eyes. All but the narrator herself were in excellent spirits; for no sooner had she finished her tale than she be-

came fully aware that she had made a great fool of herself. She was nearly dying from chagrin.

But in order to fill up the uncomfortable pause that ensued, she asked her next neighbour:

"Have you ever been in Naples, my dear? and did you know the Princess Z—— ?"

"Oh, yes! I had that honour," was the peevish answer. "Perhaps I knew more of her than anybody else. For when I and my husband were staying in Naples in 18—, the only apartments we could obtain were in the best floor of the Palazzo Z——.

"These Italian princely families, by the way, are so wretchedly off that they actually have not the means requisite to enable them to occupy their ancestral palaces. The prince and his family lived upstairs, just as if they had been our lodgers. Under these circumstances, therefore, I had every opportunity of being initiated into the domestic economy of princely households. What misery gilded over! To the eye everything was as excellent as it was possible to imagine. The *suites* of apartments—at least, those that were open to view—were furnished in the old-fashioned style, and still bore traces of their former magnificence; but here and there, where it had been necessary to patch up the old splendour, the effect was far from happy. The antechamber and vesti-

bule were full of lacqueys, who, except for the livery they had on their backs, received neither wages nor board. They lived on what they could manage to squeeze out of the visitors who came to see the prince, *i buono mano*, that is, in drink money. In the courtyard below might be seen an equipage decorated with the princely arms, and resplendent with gilt and tassels, with a pair of blood horses, which still proudly pawed the ground. It was never taken out without three liveried servants hanging on behind. So much for the outside!

"But the interior, my dear friends! A meaner, or a stingier household cannot be conceived. Only two confidential domestics had access to them—an old servant and an aged housekeeper, both devoted to the service of the princess. Of course, it was a secret from the world at large, but not from me. The old servant was steward over an empty house; the aged housekeeper, cook in an establishment where there was nothing to do except to make coffee or chocolate. At meal times all the doors were locked. Then the confidential servant sneaked down the back-stairs into the town, and quickly returned, followed by a man from the commonest *trattori*, bearing a basket which contained some food of the very simplest description. A few *foglíettos*

of the wine of the country and a little fruit constituted the meal, which was eaten without any regard to ceremony. Indeed eating and drinking were looked on as a sort of necessary evil, and not by any means as an enjoyment. Then the doors were thrown wide open once more, and the family were again visible, either at home or in the theatre. If it happened to be one of the evenings on which they were 'at home,' the princess and her daughter displayed themselves in the only two dresses of which their wardrobe consisted. It cost them but little to entertain; there was only ice and lemonade handed about; and the guests brought their conversation with them, the principal ingredient in the evening's entertainment.

"The prince occupied some honourable but ill-paid post, and was a man of some influence. It was said that he was open to a bribe through his chamberlain, and that even the smallest sums would not be refused. The chamberlain received them, and then shared them with his master according to an arranged tariff. Of course, it was an unequal division; the lion's share and the jackal's!"

The tale ought to have been brought to a close here; the lady felt it herself, but could not stop; for the company were beginning to exchange glances and make secret signs to one

another. But after a moment's indecision the interesting creature went on:

"Yes! I soon learnt by experience how matters were.

"One day I was going with my husband through one of the by-streets, in which there was a prison. Unfortunately I happened to look up as we passed it. Behind the barred windows were several disgusting-looking objects, who amused themselves in making fun of the by-passers, or in begging for alms. It was a repulsive sight! But it was destined to prove more than repulsive to me. For amongst the wretches there was one face which I knew too well, and which recognised me, as was plain from the bold, domineering look with which his eyes met mine. I shuddered as if I had been stung; my knees refused to sustain their burden; and it was only with the greatest difficulty that my husband succeeded in getting me past the horrible place.

"Next day a dirty piece of paper was secretly handed to me, containing the following words:

"'I am in prison on suspicion of theft.—*Carcere delle grotte.*—Save me, or you are lost!'

"It needed no signature. I knew it was

Francesco Patelli, our courier from olden days. I had thought him dead, or else far, far away.

"Ten years previously I had visited Naples for the first time in my life, not as the wife of a distinguished and rich gentleman, but as lady's maid to his wealthy mother.

"A French maid, you know, of the first class is always of some importance. As lady's-maid I was worth my weight in gold; and in respect of beauty I put all the ladies to shame.

"Father and son both paid their attentions to me; and money and costly gifts were heaped in showers into my lap.

"But I was too prudent to allow myself to be caught; though it was a great amusement to me to excite their passions; for father and son were both brimming over with jealousy towards each other. It was very interesting! Indeed, the old man was nearly becoming imbecile from love, while the young man almost went raving mad. Thus I could twist them round my finger as I pleased.

"But what was to be done? The little game must come to an end sooner or later. I could not turn the old man to any account; but the young one—aye, there was the rub!

"I could very easily prevail on him to elope with me and make me his wife; but then the old man had it in his power to disinherit him.

If anything was to come of it, this contingency at least must be guarded against. So I made an appointment with the courier of the family, Francesco Patelli, in whose face I had long since read the rascal.

"I let myself be eloped with!

"Papa and the courier set off in pursuit. But there is an old saying, '*Festina lente.*' By some unfortunate and unforeseen accident the old gentleman departed this life; a little suspicion rested on the courier, but unattended with further consequences. And when we met afterwards at a place agreed upon, in order to give him his wages for the service he had rendered me, I was the young gentleman's bride, and joint-heir to the estate.

"But now . . . . ! They were fearful words . . . . 'Save me, or you are lost!'

"Something then must be done, and that quickly!

"I asked for a conference with the prince. The gallant gentleman did not make me wait long. On the bold supposition that what report said was true, I came to the point with all the delicacy and the *finesse* I was mistress of, and begged him to use his influence in procuring the release of one Francesco Patelli, who was an old servant of the family, but who now, poor fellow, was

pining away in prison under the groundless suspicion of having been implicated in some highway robbery. Thereby, I added, the prince would gain another opportunity of showing to the world at large that in him humanity possessed one of its most noble champions.

"The prince was all smiles and compliments.

"'If he was a champion of the human race,' he gracefully expressed himself, 'it was quite certain that I was one too.'

"He would take the matter into his serious consideration, he added; but, as he had so very much to do, perhaps it would be as well if I were to speak to his chamberlain about it, in order that he might remind him of it.

"Of course I acted on this piece of advice; and in order to refresh the worthy chamberlain's memory the better, slipped a roll of notes into his hand. Whereupon he assured me that his memory was as trustworthy as gold itself; and that the prince, who was the best of masters, lived only to make himself of service to his friends.

"Two days later the prince had the pleasure to inform me that poor Francesco Patelli was released from prison.

"But for myself I had had quite enough of Naples!"

Here ended the tale.

Is it not true that queer things come to light here in Hell?

The company round the tea-table at all events were of that opinion; for seldom had they spent so pleasant an evening!

Reminiscences keep crowding on my mind. Things I had done and quite forgotten now stand before me in lifelike reality, in outlines as fresh as if I had slept but one night on them; and Aunt Betty plays a prominent part in the recollections of my childhood.

When I think of what she was to me when but a little child, it seems so real that the tears come into my eyes. Not that they really do come there. Yet it was not I myself especially that reaped the fruits of her self-denial, but my father, and for his sake my mother; still it extended itself to all who lived with her. She made herself everybody's servant. Many a time would she sit up at night in order that the poor girls might go to bed; she, too, it was who awoke them in the morning, in order that they might lie in bed as long as possible. In the long winter evenings she would be at the pains of teaching their clumsy fingers all sorts of neat and useful needlework; she looked after their clothes, cut out patterns for them

and gave them all sorts of valuable hints and advice, that they might look tidy and nicely dressed, and not like poor girls. Indeed, she was very nearly undertaking to teach the coachman to read; but my father interposed, and one of the clerks relieved her of that duty.

Though of a weakly constitution, she could undergo almost any exertion, bear any fatigue. The only thing that ever put her out of humour was when any one insisted on her taking care of herself. It seemed to her to be the most unreasonable thing in the world.

"I," she would say, with an air as if she had thrown herself into the furthest corner of the room, "should I . . . ?"

Anything was good enough for her. And she had a wonderful command over herself. When my mother, for instance, had been hard upon her, and she had retired to her own room to have a good cry, she would shortly come out again with the same gentle face as ever, without a trace of sorrow or vexation on it.

And when she was suffering, or depressed in spirits, and came into my father's room, she always had some humorous remark on her lips, some joke or other to drive away his sad thoughts. Certainly her sanguine temperament stood her in good need here; still, it was more

than a natural power that she displayed, it was her spirit that was so strong within her. Affection was instinctive to her. Odd as she was at times, strange as her whims might be, curious as her manners, yet somehow love always made her hit on the right thing. It was impossible for any person to be a better Christian, more pious than she was. Her education had been sadly neglected; she was very ignorant. Had any one questioned her on the simplest matters respecting her faith, she would have displayed the greatest ignorance. But not the less was she a rare Christian. Though great her defects, though her failings were many, yet love streamed through them all, and brought everything in order.

At her own request her room was below, situated between my father's study and the household offices. It was the only room in the whole house she could use, she said. It was clear that she must have an eye to the kitchen; but it seemed to her to be quite as necessary to see after my father. She was always afraid lest anything should happen to him, if he were out of her sight even for a single moment.

It was a plainly furnished room, but neat to a degree. Tidiness was visible everywhere, and everything had its appointed place, and

could not possibly have been found in any other. One peculiarity in the decoration of the room was the number of large and small objects of the most varied kind that were ranged round it. The furniture presented as many flat surfaces as was possible, and all of these were fully occupied. And here my aunt's odd tastes and fancies were apparent. Not only was there a confused display of natural and artificial productions all jumbled up together, but there were things which apparently were not worth the trouble of picking up out of the gutter. But my aunt knew what she was about. They were so many mementos; and by going through them it was easy to follow out the history of her life from beginning to end. Of this I early got a faint idea, and ever after regarded her motley collection not only with a deep interest, but with a certain degree of reverence. There was many a strange history attached to them. Not surprising, then, that they set my childish imagination to work, as I looked at this, now at that, wondering all the while what history might be connected therewith. Ah! many a reverie have I fallen into while contemplating them.

Aunt Betty held fashion in thorough contempt, and used to go about very simply

dressed. But though simple to a degree, nothing could be tidier or neater than her attire. She had ample means to dress differently, and she took care to let one know it at times.

"It is not for that," she would say. "I could dress as fine as any lady, if I liked."

And she spoke the truth here.

She liked to receive a little present now and then, not for the intrinsic value of the gift, but for the attention it evinced on the donor's part. Naturally, she liked to be esteemed by those for whom she sacrificed herself; so she got at one time from my father, at another from my mother, all sorts of pretty presents, especially choice and fashionable materials for dresses. Gratefully and gladly she would accept them, have them made up, and then put them by. Thus she possessed a large stock of expensive dresses, shawls, and mantles; but it was little use she ever made of them. They would get out of fashion before she had ever worn them, but she took care that they should not get spoilt.

Sometimes when I went down to see her there would be a regular exhibition taking place. The bed, the chairs, and tables would all be covered with dresses, shawls, cloaks, furs, bonnets, &c. "They wanted airing." With a happy expression of face she would walk up

and down among them, try on first one, then another; run her fingers over the soft silk; or here would be a wrinkle to smoothen out; there a speck of dust to brush away, all the while in a state of ecstasy. At such times she was far removed from all that may be termed reality.

Sometimes I found her marching about among her treasures with an elegant bonnet on her head; a shawl or a pelerine thrown over her shoulders; a wondrous attire, in strange contrast to her usual simple dress. It was as if there was an enchantment about them. Evidently she was herself no longer; no longer poor Aunt Betty hidden away from the lovely world outside in a dark smoky kitchen, with an unpoetical little chamber adjoining, where, instead of receiving the honour and homage due to her, she sacrificed herself to the happiness of others, only to be known and inadequately appreciated by these few. But when the sun went down, they were all packed up once more, and Aunt Betty was again the old woman.

Once or twice, however, in the course of the year she would boldly venture a step further.

Then she would dress herself out in her very best, and for some hours would allow my father and the servants to admire her from top to toe. She did not like showing herself

to my mother, who, though ever exemplary in her manner towards her, still could not suppress an ironical smile when Aunt Betty came out in this manner. She was not *naïve*, or else not good-natured enough to enter into the spirit of such extraordinary exhibitions, as they might well be termed, although aunt was one of the most natural creatures in the world.

Yes, the transformation was complete! She was undoubtedly the lady, and a very distinguished one too. But though dressed out in the fashion of the day, she by no means belonged to the day, but rather to an age long, long gone by, quite different in chivalrous and poetic feelings to the present.

Her manners had more of the old Spanish about them than anything else I can compare them to, so lofty was her bearing, so gracious her smile, so punctilious her demeanour! In her Don Carlos of Spain would have recognised one of the most distinguished ladies of his day.

If on such occasions the sky happened to be quite cloudless, she might take it into her head to take a short trip into the town, and show herself to the public, when her peculiar costume and somewhat strange manner never failed to cause a certain degree of sensation. But she never seemed at all annoyed at it. What better

testimony can be adduced that she was herself no longer then? It was a sort of trance, a brief moment of intoxication, that passed off, however, as soon as she had returned home. Then all her finery was put away, and it was long before it saw the light of day again. Generally, she was quite contented to know that she possessed fine clothes worthy of a lady, and this consciousness was enough for her in this as in many other respects.

Aunt Betty had, moreover, a nice little collection of handsomely bound books in her room. Whenever she heard speak of an extremely good book she would buy it at once. Not that she ever read them; "she had no time for that," she would say; "but when I am old, my dear, I shall have something to amuse myself with, and then I will read them all."

One of her peculiarities was that she could never read anything without reading it aloud. "She could only understand what she could hear," she would say.

Poor aunt!

"When she got old she would read them!" Provided that by that time she had not forgotten how to read.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of an evening when it was getting dusk I was very fond of stealing down to Aunt Betty's little room, where I generally found her sunk in a reverie. She was never cross with me for disturbing her; she loved me too much for that. So she had to tell me stories, for which indeed she had a special gift. I am quite convinced that she made the greater portion of them up as she went on. There was no particular meaning in them, but they were always interesting. In all of them there was a high moral sense underlying them, original certainly, but yet at the same time so hearty and earnest that they could not fail to appeal to a *naïve* feeling like mine.

It was from my aunt that I received my first instruction in religion, of no dogmatic character, as may be supposed; on the contrary, she always followed a practical course. Ah! how ever could those impressions, so deep, so sweet, and so tender, ever fade away from my mind?

One evening we were sitting together by the window. It was getting dark, but the sky was clear, and the stars were shining with unusual lustre. The sight of them made a wonderful impression on my childish mind. Of course I had often seen them shining before, but when I recall the impression of that hour, it is just as if I had never seen the stars shine before that evening.

I wanted to know what the stars really were, and what was behind them. So my aunt explained to me "that up yonder was our Heavenly Father's dwelling, with its innumerable mansions in indescribable splendour. And I should go up there some day, if I had been a good and holy child on earth."

I thought this very beautiful; but it did not quite satisfy me. I wanted a more detailed description; I required an express answer to my questions.

Now, anybody else but Aunt Betty would very likely have been sorely puzzled, but her imaginative powers were far too rich to allow her to be at a loss. So she told me, that behind the stars was a spacious and magnificent hall, where God the Father sat on the throne of His majesty, with His Son on His right hand. In the middle of the hall was a Christmas-tree, higher than

the highest mountain on the earth, covered all over from top to bottom with burning lamps and costly presents. And round about the Christmas-tree good and holy children danced, who had now become angels and God's own children; so joyful and happy were they! And while they were dancing round the tree, they sang praises to the honour and glory of God, and no one could possibly form an idea how lovely it was. As often as they stopped to rest themselves a while, all kinds of beautiful presents were given to them, and though this constantly took place, yet the tree was always covered with gifts.

I was quite satisfied!

"But the stars?" I inquired; "what are they?"

"I will tell you," answered my aunt.

"Round the hall is a countless number of tiny peep-holes, and the bright light from the Christmas-tree beams through them. These are the stars! While the angel children are resting themselves, they amuse themselves by peeping through these tiny holes, in order to see how the children on earth are behaving; if they are good, obedient, and holy; for they are their own brothers and sisters, and they love them so dearly, and long after them so tenderly. So, whenever you look up at the

stars, you must think that behind each star there is an angel's eye, which is looking down at you. And the star twinkles just in the same way as when one winks with the eye. So, if you do not wish the angels to shed tears over you, you must be such a very good boy; father's, mother's, and my own darling!"

Her tale affected me to such a degree that I threw myself on her bosom, and burst into tears; and it was some little time before I had regained my usual composure and curiosity. But presently I had a new question to put.

"But, dear aunty, where do the naughty children go to?"

Aunt Betty was nearly getting into a fix now. I do not mean to say that she was too prudent, but that she was too tender-hearted, to tell me about Hell and its terrors; so she only answered:

"The naughty children go to a dark place, far, far away from God the Father and His dear Son!"

But I wanted to know all the particulars, and she was therefore obliged to furnish me with them.

"Well," she began, "then I will tell you.

"The naughty children sit cooped up in a miserable back room, where the fire has gone out; and they shiver so with cold, that their

teeth chatter again in their heads. The light, too, has gone out, so they are obliged to sit in the dark, and are so frightened. They cry and sob, and beat themselves with all their might; but there is no one—no, not one—to hear them."

Her words made me tremble dreadfully.

"Oh, aunt, I am so frightened," I said, in a low tone, as I nestled up to her.

"Look up at the stars, my child!" she answered, "and you will not be frightened then."

And she took me up on her lap; and I was afraid no longer. The stars twinkled so encouragingly and cheerfully to me, that I felt as if I was under their dear eyes and protection.

"I should so like to hear them sing!" I said, presently.

"Aunty, dear, how does it sound when the angels sing?"

"You shall hear, my darling," answered my aunt, as she cleared her throat.

And with a gentle, clear, and soft voice she began to sing one of her favourite hymns. Oh! it sounded so lovely in the quiet evening; there was something so childlike in those soft, sweet notes that went to my heart, as I kept my eyes steadily fixed on the stars, that the illusion was complete. It was so dark that I could not see her face, but I could see the stars, and they

twinkled to me. It was only for a moment; but for a brief while my eyes had taken my hearing up with them, and there was no longer any earth for me, but only Heaven; for the sounds seemed to come down from above, and an indescribable feeling of awe filled my heart. Involuntarily I folded my hands, as she had taught me, and unconsciously winked with my eyes back again to the stars, as a sign that the understanding between us was mutual, and that I could hear them.

When the song had ceased, and I had come to myself once more, I felt myself to be so mean and poor. But I dreamed the whole night through about the Christmas-tree in Heaven, and the songs of the angels.

Many an evening afterwards we sat together again; aunt singing to me, and I gazing up at the stars. I quickly caught the air, and joined in with her. I think aunt was just as much a child then as I was. We were both of us quite beside ourselves while singing our angel songs to the honour and praise of God; for it seemed as if we were drawn up by an inward longing for that which was behind the stars.

One evening—but it must have been at a later period—my aunt told me the history of the rich man and Lazarus: I call it a history,

and not a parable; for of all real things there is nothing more real than this. When I first heard it, too, it was not as a parable, but as a plain, simple narrative. And the effect was surprising! True enough I envied the poor man his place in Abraham's bosom; but the rich man in torments, without a drop of water to slake his thirst, excited my sincerest sympathy. I was painfully moved. Sobbing, I hid my face in aunt's bosom, and was almost beside myself with grief.

"The poor rich man! What he must have suffered! And how cruel they were to him!"

My aunt felt quite as miserable as I did. Truly, she had calculated on making a deep impression on me, but not one of that sort; so she tried all in her power to soothe me.

"My child, do not take it to heart so! I have good reasons for believing that Father Abraham made a great mistake, when he refused to give the rich man a mere drop of cold water. The Lord can never approve of that, and if I know him right, Father Abraham will be taken to task for it. If so poor a thing as a single drop of water were able to soothe the rich man, surely God would not refuse it. He who spared not His own blood, will He be so exact about a drop of water? And, besides, did you not notice how the rich man, even in the midst of torments, thought upon his poor

brothers? God will never forget that! Brotherly love cannot but touch God's heart, even though the poor fellow were in Hell!"

It was thus she consoled me. No doubt she would willingly, and in perfect good faith, have put even a more comforting interpretation upon it, in order to solace my grief and dry my tears.

Poor Aunt Betty! she was no theologian. There was nothing real to her mind, except God's fatherly compassion; that overflowed like her own, on all sides.

And yet, why call her poor? It is I who am poor; though enriched with a fuller experience—in Hell!

These reminiscences of my childhood, even if they were ever so torturing, would absorb my thoughts. But torturing, properly speaking, they are not; full of pain, it is true, but not of torture. I do not know whether you can realize the distinction.

There is then something sweet in these reminiscences even in Hell. As on the one hand the pain is more acute,—just as the sweet in food or drink produces acidity,—so on the other, the torture, to a certain extent, is done away with. But this refers only to the recollections of childhood. If I let my thoughts glide on, though here and there a trace of sweetness may still be perceptible, it has no

longer any power over the bitterness of my remorse, and I become a prey to tormenting anguish.

Thus, I have a lively recollection of the sermon that was preached immediately before I attended my first communion. It made a deep, aye, a piercing impression upon me. How ever time, and that so short too, could quite eradicate it, I cannot even now make out!

It was from one of the worthiest ministers of our Church that I received the last religious instruction, preparatory to that holy rite.

A wild, carnal nature had already begun to assert its sway over me; but he knew how to awe me, and to rivet my thoughts. Only a look, and I was all attention; only a word, and I listened eagerly. He possessed not only the power of captivating, but of stirring one up.

His text was taken from the following words: "*Be ye reconciled to God.*" How could I ever forget them? But I did forget them entirely. Now they recur to my mind, and constantly haunt my thoughts. Involuntarily I am constrained to say to myself, "Be reconciled to God. . . . Oh, be reconciled to God!" But no sooner have they recurred to my mind, than some remorseful recollection forces its way into my heart, and drives them out again.

I recollect every single word of his sermon from beginning to end. I recollect it, but cannot give utterance to it. There is a vast difference. Neither does it prove to be the slightest benefit to me that I can recollect it; it conduces neither to my edification nor consolation, to say nothing of my peace of mind. I can recall the words, but cannot convey a single one of them to my heart. It is just as if they were hollow; or, perhaps, it is I who am hollow and empty, whom no power can fill. I know that they are God's words, that salvation and redemption are contained in them; but they pass by me. I am the rich man, pining after a drop of water; but it is denied me. I exert myself to the utmost to try and grasp if only the very smallest portion of that which hovers before me, and which once I knew so well; but all my efforts are in vain. I often fancy I am very near laying hold of it; but the next instant it is gone again. I can hold nothing firmly in my grasp. It is this unavailing, this hopeless struggle, that we have to renew again and again, that constitutes one of our greatest sufferings—aye, I might say the greatest of all.

You will now be able to understand how it is I have been able to discourse about the things belonging to the kingdom of God, and yet remain comfortless, hopeless, the prey of

despair; of the Saviour, of the Crucified, of contrition, repentance, and faith.

Like everything else in Hell, this too is hollow, vain. I have but the form; of the reality I have no conception. I know that there is a Saviour, and that He is God's Son, but I stand in no relationship to Him whatever. I cannot conceive Him; I do not even know His name. I condemn, detest myself as cordially as it is possible to do; so far I repent. But I know nothing of a fruitful repentance; mine, alas! is a tearless one.

And, finally, to speak of faith. Yes, I have faith too; but it is an empty, heartless idea, that nowhere can find a home. The devils believe also; they are obliged to do so; but they tremble!

"Be reconciled to God." How deeply those words touched me once! I thought then there was nothing worth living for except to be reconciled to God; and then to die in order to go to Him, and be with Him in His heavenly kingdom. Again the stars twinkled to me in confidence, and I forgot all the world. Oh what hallowed, what noble determinations I formed in that hour of elevation! My first admission to the altar had become an entrance upon the road to Heaven. But quickly I turned aside from it, ere I was scarce even outside the church door.

And now—I am in Hell!

"Be reconciled to God."

Again and again those words echo in my heart; not though as if they proceeded from Heaven, but as if they issued from the depths of Hell, accompanied with the most bitter, cruel scoffing.

"Be reconciled to God."

Ah! no reconciliation is possible now.

When I am at a loss what to do with myself I repair to the public promenade. Of course we have one, and that too of a very remarkable kind. Hyde Park, the Champs Elysées, Unter den Linden, Corso, Prado, are each and all excellent in themselves, but not to be compared with our promenade. Though in point of elegance there may be no perceptible difference between them, yet on that very account the variety, the motley group, the numbers, render the distinction striking to a degree. There, for instance, only one fashion is represented at a time; here, on the other hand, a thousand different fashions may be seen at one and the same instant; the fashions of centuries past. So that it affords a spectacle, so varied, so animated, and let me add so ridiculous, that it is quite unique.

Here the greatest contradictions meet, and reciprocally help to make each other the more prominent. Folly appears with a reality so striking that the spectator must perforce burst

out laughing, however miserable he may feel. On one side you may see people parading about wrapped up to their very chins; on the other, going about half naked; here, with a balloon-like circumference; there, looking like a stick. Here again tightly laced and bandaged up; and there, almost tumbling to pieces. Yonder a pair of breeches of fabulous dimensions, here a pair fitting as tight as a second skin. Here a romantic *perruque*, or a towering *toupet*, a master-piece of art; here again a head almost bald, or a profusion of curls arranged without any attention to natural grace. And so on, *ad infinitum*.

Crinolines, whalebone petticoats, waistcoats reaching down to the knees, skirts down to the heels, long waists, and short waists; pigtails, and all little sorts of tubs or castles under the name of hats or bonnets; powder, rouge, beauty patches, &c., who could enumerate them all?

It is a regular Vanity Fair!

All seem striving in the most different and ridiculous ways to make each other appear at variance with their rank. In the world such foolishness was little, if at all, visible; for only one fashion reigned at a time, and that of course was excellent beyond compare. But here it is forcibly apparent, where all fashion

meet, and frequently in the most contradictory forms.

It is inconceivable how human beings could ever have made such owls of themselves, have hit upon such apish tricks! One blushes for them. Aye! and they blush too; for themselves now, these heroes and heroines of fashion! And though they strut up and down, passing and repassing each other with derisive looks of scorn, attired in their fools' dresses, they experience no real pleasure. The satisfaction they feel is but an illusion hidden up in their garments; they are the very reverse of feeling comfortable. For they are perfectly aware of their own wretchedness; they know full well that while they are scoffing at others, they too are exposing themselves to ridicule. But the part they play is compulsory; and is the more painful, as the dress of vanity they wear, gorgeous and grand though it be, cannot even hide their nakedness. People can see through their garments, how many soever they may have on. It is true nakedness is the universal law in Hell; all come under its sway; but there is a vast difference between being naked, and publicly exposing one's nakedness to view, especially when all the while one feels convinced that he is an object of ridicule on account of an exaggerated style of dress.

Oh, fops and dandies! if you could only catch just one glimpse of such a scene, I believe you would be entirely cured.

Strange enough, and yet after all not so strange, that the generality of people are of the opinion that everything comprehended under the word vanity, under which denomination of course fashion is included, is not a sin, but at best can be considered only as an amiable, a pardonable weakness.

Well, let us suppose then that vanity perhaps in itself is no fault. I say perhaps. But however it be twisted and turned it cannot but lead to a fault, and to moral depravity. The mind thereby becomes developed in a totally false direction, and the current of life follows a perverted channel. The realities of life fade away as if shrouded in a mist, and existence becomes a lie, and devoid of fruit. Let vanity only once assert its sway, and then with even the best will in the world one is unable to addict one's self to any serious pursuit; everything becomes folly and nonsense. And when at last such an one leaves the world, he will have done nothing, though there will be thousands of things he will have left undone, or have done badly.

Who, then, dare to repeat that vanity is unattended with guilt, or with danger?

I glance back over my past life. Oh! how

clear it all seems to me now; how prudent I would be if I could only live it over again!

There is a very general opinion in the world that a man must be an exceedingly wicked one to find himself in Hell. But let me tell you, you shortsighted ones, that it is inconceivable how little can send a person there, when life comes to a close without the Saviour having been found. Without Him the soul cannot endure the least burden; but with Him, aye with Him, though pressed down under a mountain load of sin, it can raise itself and soar up to Heaven.

Do you know the Saviour? I ask as one who knows Him no longer.

I should like to tell you a little tale I once heard somewhere or other in Italy; and yet I should think twice before doing so, for there are subjects which it does not do to joke about, least of all in Hell.

Still it might do you good to hear it, and I do not think it can do me any harm to tell it. Not that I entertain any fear about the matter, but only an instinctive feeling of shyness or aversion, or whatever you may please to term it.

Well, I will conquer that. It is but a romance; a kind of burlesque popular tradition; but there is a deep, an earnest truth contained in it.

God had predetermined from all eternity to create man. The Devil also knew from the beginning that such was God's purpose. And God accomplished His design; He created man, and it cost Him no trouble at all to furnish him with every perfection; for He simply created him after His own image. On the other hand, it caused the Devil the severest exertions to try and find out how he could best ruin this lovely and precious creation of the Almighty.

"Now I have it," said Lucifer to his grandmother, who was sitting in a corner of Hell, knitting. She was knitting snares, and plots, and springes; of course only for her own pleasure, for she could live well enough without doing that. "Now I have it: I will implant an evil desire in man's mind, so that he will set his heart on what is forbidden, and will find pleasure in disobedience. I will make him a wrong-doer; I will!"

"Very good, little son; very good!" mumbled his old grandmother; "but it will not do. Desire can be kept in check, and the Lord God is strong enough to do that."

"The deuce!" said the Devil. "Well, I must think a little more over it." And he retired into the deepest abyss in Hell; he called it his study. There he sat for a thousand

years; his chin resting on his hand, and his glowing eyes incessantly staring out straight before him. He did not notice how time was passing.

"Now I have it," he exclaimed, when at the end of the thousand years he came out from his den. "I will fill man's soul with self-love and self-will. I will blind him, so that he shall only be able to look at what concerns himself. I will make a villain of him, great or small, according to circumstances."

"Very good, my boy; very good, indeed," answered his grandmother. But at that moment she dropped a stitch. "Oh, hold me a brand. . . . Soh, now I have got it. Very good, my boy; but it will not do. Self-love and self-will can be rooted out, and the Lord God is able to do that."

"Confound it," said Lucifer; "then I must try again. Now, *pazienza*, what is to be is to be."

And off he went again to hide himself up in his den.

After the lapse of another thousand years he again emerged, and found his grandmother exactly on the same spot as before, knitting away, and buried in deep thought. She was so old that a thousand years made no difference in her; though perhaps she was just a little

trifle more bent, and the claws on her fingers had grown just a tiny bit longer.

"Now I have it," said the Devil, with a conceited air of triumph. "I will take up my abode in man's heart, and will turn everything upside down within him. His nature, and his inclinations, shall be entirely perverted. He shall take falsehood to be truth, vice to be virtue, ignominy to be honour. In a word, I will make him a fool."

"It won't do, my lad; it won't do," answered his grandmother, as she finished a row, and bit off the thread with the only tooth she had remaining. "There is more than that needed, far more than that. What has once been overturned, can be placed up again; the crooked can be made straight; and the Lord God is able to do it."

"I shall soon get tired of it," growled the Devil. "This intense studying tells upon one. But it would be foolish to give up half-way." And so he went off once more to his den.

Again a thousand years passed, without the almanac, and without anybody knowing what had become of them. Nothing is better than when time passes with as little fuss as possible.

When the Devil returned he really did look fagged. His grandmother was seated

in her old place; but this time, contrary to custom, her hands were on her lap. Evidently she had been longing after her son. Wit or fool, she had only him.

"Now, at last, I have it!" exclaimed Lucifer. "I will make vanity man's second nature. Ape-like, he shall become enamoured of himself, and do all sorts of apish tricks. I will, to speak plainly, make him a fool. Man shall become the ridicule and laughing-stock of his brother man."

"Ho, ho! you have hit it there, my boy," whined out the old woman, as joy gleamed out of her red, bleared eyes. "The others were good, too; brilliantly conceived; but they had one failing, they were not innocent enough. However covetous, however perverted man might become, he would constantly feel that there was something amiss; he would lose confidence in himself, and events would teach him caution. Remember conscience! And one can never tell what God in His boundless love may please to do for the miserable race.

"But with vanity it is quite a different matter. It is a grand discovery. Your part in the world will be a great one, my son. Everything connected with it is so apparently innocent, so unlikely to cause suspicion; for what can be more innocent apparently than

to wile away the time, to amuse one's self, to be joyful amongst the joyous, beautiful amongst the lovely, to wear fine clothes, to aim after graceful and *distingué* manners, to have one's natural and acquired accomplishments duly appreciated? Mankind will give itself completely up to vanity; through vanity, lust, self-will and folly will gain the dominion; and in perfect innocence they will travel along the high road to Hell. True enough, the Lord God can do what He pleases; there is no doubt of that. But I was not born yesterday, and for my part I cannot imagine how God ever can interpose to arrest the course of the vain, as with the easiest and securest conscience they go fooling along the road to Hell."

The old woman had worked herself up into such a pitch of excitement that she had grown quite eloquent. She shook in her seat, and her joints rattled, so withered was she; and her skin, which seemed of all colours, hung on her in loose folds.

"I'm proud of you, my lad!" she resumed. "It is only right that I should do my part in furthering such an excellent plan. When I change my skin I'll make it look so fine for you; it will be so beautiful and soft, and of such a lovely colour, that it will take every

fool's fancy. It will be your business then to force it into the hands of mankind. It will be easy enough to do so. With his apish nature man will dress himself up in anything, provided it be only singular and rather brilliant. Then you will see, Diavolino, what beautiful things will come of it. They will call it the Fashion; it will be looked on as the most harmless, the most innocent, thing in the world. Ha! ha! ha! and it will be neither more nor less after all than my old discarded hide. But it will be a powerful means of nurturing vanity and of making life result in nothingness. Then the fool will first appear in human nature in a thousand fantastic and ever-varying forms. But I must go and take a little exercise now, that my skin may slip off all the easier. One gets quite stunted from sitting still so long."

Lucifer was in ecstasies.

"*Per Baccho!*" he shrieked. "Soh! at last then all is right. God may create His man now whenever He pleases!"

Thereupon he took his old grandmother up on his back, and danced up and down Hell. It tickled her fancy to such a degree, that she nearly split herself with laughing.

"Mind my skin!" she cried; "my boy, mind my skin!"

CHAPTER IX.

PERHAPS you will be surprised to hear me speak of Literature in Hell. A few explanatory remarks, however, will suffice to remove your astonishment. It is simply thus: As every specific evil finds its way down to Hell, so also does everything that is of an immoral tendency, or exceedingly foolish, descend here, whether it be in a written or printed form. First come the works themselves, then their authors. Thus you see, literature cannot by any means be said to be poorly represented here; and as may be supposed, it is tolerably one-sided.

Light literature is very fully represented by a number of trashy novels. All civilized countries and peoples have contributed towards it, though in very different proportions. Some are distinguished by the quantity, others by the quality, of their contributions. The last-named may be divided into two classes—schools they cannot properly be termed—the

piquant, and the racy. Both have their special representatives. I mention no names; but doubtless it will be an agreeable surprise to some authors who are still living to hear how extensively their talents are appreciated, as they not only write for the world, but also for Hell. As far as regards any remuneration from this latter place, the authors must be content to waive their claim, at least for the present, till they come here themselves. Then doubtless matters will be satisfactorily arranged.

This light literature is in as great demand here as it was in the world. There are those, indeed, who, so to speak, live on nothing else. But still that soul has not yet been found that has received any edification from it. It was little enough in the world, forsooth, but here it is much less. It is a natural consequence. In the world an excited imagination and inflamed desires could be appeased after a fashion, but there is no such thing possible here.

Neither is there any lack of theological works, critical, dogmatical, or homiletical.

In casuistry, too, we are well supplied; but it forms a special branch of science by itself. The olden time is mainly represented by a huge mass of priestly lies, gradually brought into a system; of all kinds of fanatical fabri-

cations and fantasies on one given theme—Religion. The age of Voltaire and of the Encyclopædists is the period when they reached their zenith; but a fresh impulse was imparted by Kant and his disciples. Regarded in a theological point of view from Hell, the French Revolution is neither more nor less than a new Messiah-birth; but how different from that first birth at Bethlehem! For the rest, all ages have added diverse contributions.

Of late some critical historical works, under the title, ". . . . of Nazareth's Life," have awakened extraordinary interest. Ah, look at the vacant space above! A name should stand there, but I am as little able to write it, as I am to pronounce it. My hand glides over the paper, but the name escapes me. In all these writings He, whom I can name no more, is only represented to be crucified afresh. From this you will be able to form a tolerably clear notion of our theological literature. It presents an admirable apparatus to any one who wishes to study himself into becoming a rank infidel!

But even in Hell one may get on the wrong track; even here there is a something worse to be dreaded. I never was a theologian, and never shall be one in this place!

Of course, in addition to these we possess a number of works by infidel writers, which have either been burnt, or not burnt; by puffed-up, perverted, crack-brained fanatics; by false prophets of all kinds, who have tried in different ways to make a capital out of religion. As novelties, forsooth, these writings readily command a certain degree of silly attention. But it is seldom long before the author comes here himself. Then the matter is solved in a very lamentable, or rather, let me say, in a manner, with regard to circumstances in Hell, which is extremely exhilarating; and the new theology and doctrine of salvation is confined to a certain corner of Hell, where its disciples eke out an existence very different to the lofty ideas they had formed.

Philosophical treatises are not so abundant. Philosophers on the whole must be regarded as very harmless people. Either they are really wise, and therefore good and pious; or else they have lapsed into a quiet, perfectly harmless kind of madness. Only, therefore, where a domineering spirit pervades their works, do we see anything of them. Thus we have not so few interesting attempts, made in a room eighteen feet square, not only to measure the world, but the whole of existence; to bring the entire creation into a system for

time and eternity; and with a pinch of snuff, or a snap of the finger, to solve the riddle of life.

I allude to the juridical profession only *en passant*, and as by way of parenthesis. If I were not to mention it, it would seem as if I held it in contempt, and I should be sorry even in Hell to have any disagreeables with the lawyers.

The fact simply is, that, however great my respect is for jurisdiction, I am totally unable to appreciate it: a deficiency on my part, doubtless. "*Corpus juris*," to my mind, is a tangled net of enormous dimensions!

The works of the Rabulists are ranged in long dust-covered rows. What the Rabulists are was never quite clear to me; but I suppose they are to jurisdiction what the Encyclopædists were to theology.

Works of sophistry are only alluded to to enable me to say that they are remarkable both for their refinement, and for their grossness; which of the two elements preponderates I am quite at a loss to decide.

As a matter of course, one load of shameful law-suits succeeds the other, and the papers swell into mountainous heaps. It is truly wonderful how ever the world had eyes to wade through them all. They compose one vast dung-hill; but that soil does not exist which

it is fitted to manure. There is scarce a single parish in the world but has its Aceldama!

With regard to the reviewer's profession, we have all kinds of abominable reviews, productions of ignorance, spite, thoughtless love of mischief, or pure malice. It is a well known fact that reviewers are a peculiar race of people, in whom there is but little of what is human, because nothing is so remote from their nature as humanity. Some people maintain that a reviewer must needs be a misanthrope in order to write a good critique. But that is saying rather too much. Others are doubtless nearer the mark when they assert that there is a great deal of cynicism about them; for certainly reviewers are sarcastic, greedy, and sordid to a degree.

When I was alive I formed my own opinion about this class of people, but I will by no means insist that it was absolutely the right one. But I still maintain that reviewers may be divided into two principal classes; the one consisting of those who are competent to criticise, but who take no pleasure in it, in fact, would rather not do it. In the world one seldom sees anything from their pen; here, never.

The other class comprises those who, though quite incompetent, yet, in the Devil's name, will write reviews. These flood the world with their

productions; and, either by violence or fraud, sway public opinion. Hell teems with them!

This latter class can again be subdivided into two branches: professional reviewers, and *amateur* reviewers.

The first mostly consists of those who have themselves attempted literature, but have signally failed in their attempts, and now feel themselves called upon to drag as many as possible into the same dirty and pitiable condition they are in themselves, omitting no opportunity, despising no means, wherewith to accomplish their object. The significant expression "to run a person down," a scientific one by the way, is said to have originated with them. Criticism has become their handicraft; but the bread they eat is sour and bitter. They only live, only breathe to discover faults; and, when these are not to be found, to invent them. Their whole life is spent in accumulating gall.

These reviewers are the most active fellows imaginable. I once heard it said, that the best ratting-cat was a rat itself, that had once tasted rat's flesh. If this be true, the same remark may readily be applied to the reviewers. Once let them conceive a taste for authorship, and they become the deadliest foes a poor author can have. I have a suspicion that Cerberus,

for a time, was nothing but a reviewer, who had written or barked in three papers.

We have a goodly number of professional reviewers. We avoid them as if they were mad dogs, for they are as snappish as ever, and form one of the worst plagues in Hell. Not unfrequently they evince the most evident symptoms, not of hydrophobia, but of *ink-phobia*, so much so that in some places they have been muzzled.

The other sub-division consists of young persons, not devoid of wit, nor deficient in talents, but terribly green; in fact, just liberated from school discipline. They want something out of the way to cool their young blood in, and so take to writing reviews for some journal or magazine. They do not mean any harm by it; it is merely an excellent method for them to show that they are justified in wearing a hat, and to forget that only a year ago they were schoolboys. They swing themselves up into the *cathedra* with an air almost divine, enveloped, of course, in clouds, and belch forth their incontrovertible knowledge. I repeat that these fine young fellows do not mean any harm; it is seldom that they confine themselves to the subject in hand, but aim only at writing pleasantly; at making a few witty remarks, and at getting an opportunity

of appearing in Olympian glory. How it fares with the poor author, whether he is living or dead, is a matter of total indifference to them; they use him but as a stepping-stone under their feet, whereby they may be able to soar aloft into indefinite and airy heights.

One might almost be tempted to suppose that malicious reviewers in Hell are ranked in the same catalogue with murderers, that is, murderers in the spiritual meaning of the word, and that the first named are guilty of wilful murder, the latter only of unintentional homicide. But such is not the case. They stand in the same rank, or rather list, with unjust judges.

These reviews, then, after a fashion, make it possible for us to follow up the literature of the world. As soon as such a review arrives here, we know at once that some good, or, at all events, some harmless book has come out above. Of course we only get a distorted representation of it, only see the wrong side of what has been published. But we are used to it, everything goes on in this way.

Neither are the daily papers, especially the political ones, unrepresented; namely, such as are used for a pecuniary speculation, or have sold themselves to serve some paltry party interest, and which do not hesitate, for lucre's

sake, to mislead public opinion, or to wheedle it. Above all, no sooner does any shameful article appear in any paper whatsoever, than it comes down straight to Hell, as neatly cut out as if it had been done by the scissors of a reviser. Parliamentary reports naturally afford a goodly supply. You may imagine that we get many a good speech to read of ministers and deputies: at one time a sheer mass of balderdash that makes one's ears tingle, at another, a pack of lies from first to last, so artfully woven together and glazed over, that one is almost induced to believe that there is actually some reality about it. So that we are able to follow up the occurrences of the day, though after a perverted fashion. It gives one really quite a wonderful impression to see first one, now another of one's good old acquaintances standing forth and delivering a hearty blow, and then disappearing as if he had never existed. It puts me in mind of the laughable custom I have seen in Holland and other countries, on Shrove Monday, viz. of knocking the cat out of the basket.

But you know all this as well as I do myself. What you do not, however, know as well as we do, is the multitude of dispatches, notes, circulars, confidential communications, which are exchanged between the cabinets of

the world, in the service of politics, for the greatest part for false and crafty ends; you know nothing about the protocols which are couched in the most obliging, and yet cautious and equivocal style, always speaking in the name of truth, of righteousness and of humanity, and yet having no more regard either for truth, righteousness, or for humanity, than for a sour herring, directly interest or any other evil passion comes into play.

The greater proportion of these political emanations never comes to the knowledge of the world, but goes down straight to Hell, little indeed to our edification. Of course we glean a great deal of remarkable information; but it only fills us with an impotent feeling of exasperation. I have always suspected it, but now am quite convinced, that the falsest, most cruel, and most ungodly being in the world, is your so-called high politician.

From this cursory sketch you will see that we are by no means deficient in point of reading here; and it will also have been impressed upon you, that out of all this dirty, poisonous rubbish, nothing of a refreshing or edifying nature can be found. It will not even suffice to wile away the passing moment. For the more we read, the more miserable do we feel, and the more numerous do our evil recollections

become. But we must seek dissipation; we are, as it were, driven to it, though we know full well that it is nowhere any longer to be found.

It seldom or never occurred to me while I was in the world, that I had anything to be thankful for. Health, prosperous circumstances, I enjoyed as things that came as a matter of course. If ever I did bestow a single thought upon them, I attached but little weight to it. For I was never contented; neither with life, with the world, nor yet with myself. I perceive and feel now what a rich blessing from on high lay in all these things, greater than tongue can express, and so much the greater, because they were quite unmerited. When I look back, and I am incessantly constrained to do so, for there is nothing to look forward to, save one thing, one terrible thing —Judgment and Damnation—I cannot but acknowledge that the benefits which are vouchsafed even on a single day in any man's life are countless. Life is so rich! Doubtless there is a good deal of misery in the world. I myself have joined in crying, "Ah!" and "Woe!" over it. But the misery of the whole universe shrinks into nothingness when compared with that which I have recently undergone. Viewed from Hell, even the most miserable man on earth has infinitely much to

be thankful for. A human being's life, whatever it be, ought to be a life of gratitude. Even if out of all the good things of the world he has been able to retain naught but fresh air, light, and a crust of bread, he has unspeakably much to be thankful for. I see it all now when it is too late. Here there is nothing, alas! actually nothing to be thankful for. But you, who are still alive, you still have time to recognise the truth. Oh! lay these words of mine to your hearts; they are full of suffering and not devoid of love.

You will have noticed how incessantly I am harassed by evil thoughts, though of their extent you can form no idea. My actual misdeeds of course torture me; they lie like stones, hot, burning stones on my heart. It is not of them I am thinking. But every one of my actions in which I have only slightly erred, forces itself on my memory; each little untruth, falsehood, wrong, or merciless deed; every little act of deception; every little breach of faith and flaw, and so on to infinity. They fall on me with knives and scissors, cutting and piercing me to the very quick. Once they seemed so trivial, that I paid no heed to them, but quickly consigned them to oblivion. But they had their signification, and now they make it felt without mercy

They had quite vanished; they existed no longer, each year laid a sod upon their graves. But still there was a hidden, an imperishable life within them, and now they all come back to me one by one. I remember them with a preciseness which is indescribably painful, and I am completely at their mercy.

Now that I am thinking of giving you one or two instances, in order that you should thoroughly understand me, they swarm by hundreds before me. I will select the first that comes.

Of late I have been constantly haunted by the piteous looks of a ragged little urchin. In whichever direction I turn, there he stands or rather lies before me, gazing at me with a pair of dark, sorrowful eyes. The story is as follows:

"One evening as I was walking outside the town, a little boy ran before me, and importuned me to buy something of him. But I did not want anything, and so pushed him aside time after time. Still he would not be repulsed, but would keep getting in my way; till at last getting impatient, I took him by the arm and pushed him aside. I did not mean any harm to the lad, though I must acknowledge that at that moment my intentions were not quite what they ought to have been.

Doubtless, I could have got rid of him by gentler and better means, but to speak plainly I was annoyed, and would not be bothered. I suppose I must have used rather too much force, for the boy fell into the gutter, and began to weep bitterly, either because he had received some hurt, or because his wares had got broken. On turning round, a piteous glance from a pair of dark eyes, filled with pain and reproach met mine. I could very easily have repaired what I had done; but it never occurred to me to do so. I was too much taken up with myself, and I passed hastily on.

Now, I ask, would anybody call this a really evil deed? No; I am convinced they would not! But here in Hell one's feelings are nicer. And so after so long a lapse of time that little boy's face returns to my memory to add its contribution to the measure of my misery; truly but an infinite small portion of my entire wretchedness; but the instance cited is but one amongst hundreds of others that are constantly recurring to my thoughts.

And it is not only those things, those trifling things I have done amiss, that rise up and reproach me, but every evil word I have ever uttered comes back and makes me smart for it. Once they had issued forth from my mouth like poisoned shafts; like poisoned shafts they

come back to me and pierce my heart to its core.

Oh, then, weigh your words well, you who still have a living voice; for the evil one single careless word is capable of producing in the world is incalculable. If you will not treat others leniently, at least be merciful towards yourselves. For the ultimate goal of all your evil words is your own heart!

All kinds of conversations, long long since forgotten, are now remembered with an accuracy that is perfectly maddening. I can see now how every word fell from my lips, every look that accompanied it. I wish not to see it, but am compelled. And those evil words of mine which are now no longer capable of injuring others, wound me, and produce incurable sores.

And not only does every evil deed and every evil word come back to me, aye, but every wicked thought and idea; and they sting my heart, and never let me know a moment's peace.

I have often heard it said in the world, "In Nature nothing is lost!" No, nothing, alas, is lost in the spiritual world; not even the very smallest iota!

But not only the evil I have done, but the good I have left undone, rises up in judgment

before me and condemns me. Innumerable are these accusing enemies. Both what has existed and what has never been assumes a form, and rises up against me. Frightful apparitions are they, sufficient to people a whole world around me, in the midst of which I stand alone, and condemned. The good I have neglected, too! Ah me! it is almost worse than the evil I have committed. For the temptation to evil was often so strong, it would have cost such great exertions, entailed such severe sacrifices, to have withstood it. But to have done that which was good would have cost little or nothing. It is all so clear to me now.

Yes! it is passing strange what a clear view one gets of the world and of human life from Hell!

The man who neglects to do good is inexcusable; for however limited his means and resources may be, opportunities are constantly recurring. It all depends upon his possessing a heart. Therein lies the power—there the blessing. By a wondrous contrivance of Him whose being is love; there is but a trifling difference between poor and rich in this respect, between the powerful and the weak.

Oh, take care, then, my brothers and sisters, you who still see the light of day! take care that you never become the prey of a

bitter remorse; how bitter I cannot tell you! Let no opportunity of doing good pass by you. It is so easy, and it costs so little. For the opportunities you allow to pass by unused will some day return to accuse and condemn your soul through all eternity.

I am not addressing myself now to the really hard-hearted oñes. God alone can touch them. But there are some soft hearts which only need a sunbeam, or a warm breath of wind to open them. It was by no means my misfortune in the world to possess a hard heart; on the contrary, under ordinary circumstances I was readily moved to compassion. But either I did not pay any attention to what concerned other people; or, if I did, it was with a glance so fleeting that it was forgotten again directly. Ah! if I only knew that my experience would be of benefit to you, how it would sooth my pain. But I do not know it, and however fain I would believe it, I am compelled to entertain serious doubts about it; for doubt, horrible doubt, is one of the chief components in the pains of Hell.

Again I feel a desire to exemplify what I have said. A living example has such a wondrous power about it. Aye, and a living example it is, though it comes from the realms of Death:

Two doors from my house there dwelt a poor family in a cellar. As I passed by it my eyes used involuntarily to fall upon a window in it. There was a bald-head in constant motion that rivetted my attention, but it was a long time before I could get a view of the face belonging to it. He was a father of a large family, and sat on that bench bent over his work with unflagging diligence from morning till night. Apparently not necessity alone, but interest also made him so eager. He was a wood-carver of some talent, and used to make toys for a large toy warehouse in the town. Strange enough, he excelled especially in making all kinds of wild, savage beasts. I say strange enough, for he looked far from being ferocious himself; to judge by the expression of his face, a meeker, gentler, more pious soul could not have existed. He got over his work very quickly, and the window-ledge above him was filled with lions, wolves, and hyænas marching one after the other. His *forte* lay especially in wolves and innocent lambs. Still he found it hard work to support his family, which was already large, and kept increasing regularly each year. But as far as I could judge, they were a very happy family. The wife took in washing, sold little billets of wood for the stoves, and baked potatoes; in

short, helped in a variety of ways. Thus, either assisted the other, and with care they managed to make both ends meet.

But a time of adversity arrived. The toy-warehouse failed. No longer could I see the shining bald-head in the deep cellar; all was as dark as the grave down there. What had become of it? I asked myself once. And after that I never troubled myself further about the matter.

But one day as I was taking a walk outside the town my memory was refreshed. I not only saw my bald-head again, but his whole person. The poor, infirm old creature, who had hitherto been occupied only in very light work, had been obliged through sheer necessity to work in a brick yard—a labour of the severest nature. His knees literally tottered under him, and the sweat rained down in big drops from his forehead.

I felt sorry for him; it was plain he was working himself to death. His life was in as great danger as if all the tigers, wolves, and hyænas he had ever made were living animals, and were attacking him. And there was yet something more touching still about the case. Once or twice I was witness to a family scene. The wife would bring her husband his dinner, all the children with her, one on her arm,

another in her apron, and the rest following her on foot. I saw how tenderly she wiped the perspiration off her husband's brow; how the children clung around him, and how grateful he seemed for all the attention and care lavished on him, and how strong he made himself appear for their sakes.

I felt much moved at the scene, and on my return home decided that something must be done for the poor family. It would not have been difficult for me. I could easily have got the man a situation as porter, inspector, or some other light employment; for from the position I held I had many such opportunities. But, meanwhile, I had to leave home on business; and on my return I had forgotten all about the matter; when it did recur to my mind, it was too late. The poor things (what else could have been expected?) had perished.

But there is even yet worse to follow. Whether it is only a fantasy belonging to the juggleries of Hell, or whether it is really a kind of clairvoyance peculiar to its denizens, I am often able, as it were, to follow up the evil I have been the cause of on its way through the world, and to mark how it has spread from one to another without bound or limit. It is far from my wish to track its course, but I am compelled to do so from stage to stage,

till it accumulates into one, and I can perceive no more.

Terrible are the effects, fearful the misery which one bad, or even thoughtless act, aye, or one careless word is able to accomplish in the world. Singly and alone they are mischievous enough; but the mischief would be but proportionately small if they exhausted themselves in one blow, and then perished or became powerless. But such is not always the case. Frequently they possess a diabolical power of spreading, so that it is in their consequences they first become harmful. One misery follows on another indefinitely. It is not the actual evil in and by itself that lays the world waste, but its consequences.

This leads me to think of offences.

Oh, what a terrible instrument are they in the world, more terrible than any one can possibly imagine! With good reason has woe been cried over those from whom offences come. They are worse than the plague-smitten or the leprous. Offences especially have a devilish power of propagating themselves. There is no limit to their consequences. The evil which bad men commit is in itself nothing when compared with the evil which they cause by a scandalous example. The wicked principle issues forth; no longer have they any

control over it. It now proceeds by itself, knowing no restraint. Its consequences are felt long after the persons are dead and gone, and the responsibility, therefore, becomes greater. Ah! it is fearful.

It is painful to say it, but I fear it is in this very point the demon within me has gained such strength. Offences have proceeded from me in all directions, and unconsciously I have been the destruction of thousands. It is all clear enough now; one thing comes back to my mind after the other with the most bitter remorse, and makes itself the more felt, because I believe that I am able in the spirit to track the evil which once proceeded from me on its course through the world, with its endless consequences of woe.

Do you understand me? You will do so if I only adduce one or two instances.

One evening I chanced to meet a number of jovial young fellows at a large banquet. I had been especially invited to honour the entertainment with my company. The distinguished part I was asked in all sincerity to take pleased me not a little, so I went. Under the circumstances, of course I felt it my duty to take on myself to amuse the company. That evening I found it no difficult work; I was witty and humorous, and my humour

waxed stronger and stronger with excitement. A great number of speeches were made and toasts proposed. At last I rose to propose a toast and make a speech. I knew I was looked up to as an authority by the young fellows, so that I could make them believe and do anything I pleased. I therefore stood up as one from whose mouth streams of rich experience flowed.

"Only venture" was the subject of my speech. I alluded to what I had attained in the world, how rich my life had been in enjoyments, nearly all of them the fruits of "only venturing." In that little word a treasure of knowledge was contained, greater than all the treasures of Solomon. What better advice, therefore, could I give my young friends before whom the world had just unfolded itself, than "Venture, only venture, venture to be happy!"

My speech was received with clamorous applause. The wine was strong, but my speech was stronger; they were intoxicated with my words. Some, indeed, soon shook it off, but with three or four at least the baneful advice struck root, and they issued forth into the world to put into practice a maxim three-fourths of which was false. It could not be otherwise than destructive to them, and

through them to numberless others. For the false principle which appeared so grand and brilliant, extended further from soul to soul. Alas! it is spreading still, and I see no end to it.

Yet another incident, and one of the most burning.

I had been on a visit to a friend of mine in the country, and was just on the point of leaving. The carriage was at the door, and I was actually stepping into it, when I recollected that I had left something in my room; so I hurried back to fetch it. There was a maid-servant there, busy tidying up; she was young and uncommonly pretty, scarcely eighteen years old. All at once the whim seized me, and I threw my arms around her, and gave her a kiss. With a feeling of injured modesty she disengaged herself from my embrace, and blushing deeply stammered forth:

"Sir, I am a poor, but a virtuous girl!"

"Poor, my child! what? you poor!" I answered. "With a beauty like yours, you are immensely rich; you could buy the heart of a millionaire!"

Thus I spoke in the thoughtlessness of the moment; for I did not attach any meaning to my words; it was only one of those silly ways of expressing myself peculiar to me at that time of my life.

The poor girl stood blushing before me, while I continued in the same tone and spirit:

"And now, my beauty, to thank me for the golden lesson I have given you, you shall bestow a kiss on me of your own free will; perhaps we shall never meet again."

She resisted; but I was young, and good-looking, too, and I knew how to wheedle the fair sex. In short, the result was, she let me embrace her, and gave me a hearty kiss. The girl was completely in my power; I felt it in a moment. But the moment was not mine; the postillion was blowing his horn impatiently, and I was obliged to tear myself away. But as if to prove to her that her good looks were a productive capital, I pressed a piece of gold into her hand.

Now, I did not see much harm in all this; and perhaps the greater part of the world would be of the same opinion. But in reality I had saddled the world with a tremendous evil. Not only had I instilled poison into the young girl's veins, but into her very heart. Her innocence was gone, and ruin had already struck its roots deeply. I can track it all now, and can see in the spirit what were the results.

She was engaged to a respectable mechanic. But her capital, she considered, would never

gain the coveted interest from him, and she discarded him, to his great and unconquerable sorrow.

So she went out alone into the world, to make her capital of beauty remunerative. She spread her snares far and wide; but, however prudently she intended to work, it ended in her being caught herself. She became the victim of a wily seducer. Yet this did not check the principle on which she had been working; on the contrary, it now began to flourish and to bring in interest.

As a courtezan she continued her course, and soon became one of the most accomplished and artful of her race, and thus proved the ruin of one fool after another, and her capital brought her in large returns. For a time she almost wallowed in gold. Such were the fruits of my first ducat! But she never became rich; all her wealth disappeared as it came, in senseless waste. Before she was aware of it, her capital was spent. For a time she struggled on under the lowest depths of degradation to keep herself up. But her doom was sealed, and her end was most miserable. But this was not all. The poison which had tainted her blood transfused itself into the veins of others with whom she came in contact. And even the evil principle which

she owed to me she diligently transferred into other women's hearts, and so from heart to heart it spread and grew—Oh, woe! oh, woe! —to infinity! Beauty is capital; make it pay, make it pay!

Such was the fate of one with whom I had so little to do, that I did not even know her name. How must it have fared with many others? How with Anna, against whom my sin was a hundred times greater? Strange, the spirit will not assist me in tracking her destiny! Or is it true that I dare not track it? Most probably it is between the two. If she were once to appear before me, and drag me after her. Oh, how terrible it would be!

There is a fearful power in offences! Those, therefore, who live among young people, and who are looked up to as an authority by them, have a tremendous responsibility resting on them. Consequently, bad educators of children, parents, masters, guardians, are here in numbers. They come to Hell first; it cannot be otherwise; then follow the poor children they have ruined, and their children's children, and so on; generation after generation, they meet here with bitter, terrible reproaches. I myself am among the number of these wretched people, so that I have good grounds for speaking as I do. I know what I have to

look forward to. It is, namely, to see Martin. Poor boy! He was brought up, as it were, by offences. I can truly say, but, alas! with no good meaning, that he became what I made him. He was me all the world over. But he is still alive; he may improve. But what is he likely to be, and his children after him, after the instruction he received from me? In the world I had no family. Alas! here in Hell, I shall chance to have a large one. Still let me say, God watches over all. For Martin, and for his, there is still a Saviour!

How I loved him spite of all his rude behaviour! Perhaps it was sheer selfishness on my part; or perhaps I loved him because I found the reflection of myself in him. But it was a strange affection. At last it was mingled with envious feelings. I could not but feel jealous of him, when I saw how each day he grew handsomer, more lovable, more captivating, than myself; how gradually he became my successful rival in everything. But these feelings of jealousy so far from diminishing the love I felt towards him, on the contrary increased it. One of these impressions is especially lively in my remembrance.

As he grew up I paid great attention to his physical development. His mental education I left for others to see to, and I did

not ask many questions; but I took upon myself to instruct him in all kinds of gymnastic and manly accomplishments. An accomplished hand myself, I taught him fencing, shooting, riding, boxing, and wrestling. He was unusually strongly built, and was perfectly and symmetrically made. Even before his twentieth year the athlete was so far developed in him that he would have excited admiration in Greece or in Rome. We used to wrestle nearly every day, and each day I noticed that he became stronger. A time soon arrived when I perceived that it was all I could do to keep my own against him. And even that soon passed. One day—the thought of it even now excites me—he lifted me off my feet three times, hugged me in his arms, and threw me with violence to the ground. Henceforth he was my master. I might have foreseen that it would be so soon. For not only did my powers decrease with increasing years, but his grew stronger. Still it vexed and worried me; and I could not forgive him. But at the same time, strange to say, I was inwardly proud of him, and admired him passionately for it.

The jealousy I entertained towards him, however, became the more confirmed, when at last he superseded me in the affections of

that young person on whom I had cast my eyes. Even the love I bore to him could not stand this.

Will he come? I dare scarcely doubt it. He belongs to me, and I am in Hell. Then I shall get an answer to the burning question that was on my lips as I left the world, and which incessantly makes my heart ache now. But dare I wish for an answer? A terrible suspicion often comes over me that the answer must contain something fearful. But—even if I should have to swallow all the pains of Hell at one gulp—I must and will have that question answered, "What had he to reveal?"

CHAPTER X.

WHAT an oppressive stillness reigns in Hell among its thousands of millions and millions!

I thought at one time I should get used to it, but that will never be. What a transition from the noisy, boisterous world! But however wild our life, not a sound is heard among us. Yes! there is certainly a sound connected with the speech of individuals, but it is heard only by the ears for which it is intended. Perhaps this, too, is only imagination; we catch at the words, and conceive the sound.

Hell is full of noisy people. Can you conceive how it is? However much they exert themselves they are not able to give utterance to the smallest sound. If ever they longed for a stupor to seize them it is now; but stupor is nowhere to be found. They become the wretched victims of the confusion they create.

It snowed to-day, for the first time, though there are no signs of winter; the lowest degree of cold ever prevails here with the greatest

heat. It snowed to-day a perfect storm of privy-counsellors, counsellors of justice, and of state; court-marshals, excellencies, petty knights, commanders, and grand crosses of various orders, &c. &c.

A number of the last "... *ske Tidende*," which came in soon after, explained it all.

In one of the petty states of the world a colossal distribution of titles and orders had taken place on the occasion of a marriage.

Small nations are generally madder than others in this respect. But, at least, they should reflect that a whole nation consisting only of knights and counsellors would present one of the most ridiculous spectacles in the world. But such appears to be their aim. Indeed, many have brought it to such a pitch, that it is not only considered no honour to wear a title or a decoration, but rather a disgrace to be without one. It is all the same to us in Hell. We can very well put up with a little snow. However fast it comes down, the flakes are dissolved just as in a thaw, leaving no traces behind saving a certain unpleasant odour.

Still a word of comfort should be said on behalf of these poor titled folk; that all titles and orders do not come down to Hell. Some of them find their proper place in

the world, though generally it is vanity altogether.

Apropos of the "... *ske Tidende!*" There was a very remarkable article in it, headed "Freedom on the broadest foundation." It was really very well written, and its style was so full and overflowing, that it afforded quite a peculiar interest to read between the lines. The author is rather low in the world at present, but would willingly be higher. Therefore, it is that he would like to have all "constraining bands loosened." If ever he comes into authority he will be one of the worst despots (not to say tyrants) the world has ever known. Another wolf in sheep's clothing! But it is in vain I cry, "Take heed, take heed!" The world will be imposed on.

As the light waxes stronger, my heart becomes more and more uneasy. I look forward with anxious expectation to the hour when the splendour on yonder side the abyss shall be revealed to my eyes. Paradise seen from torment must indeed be a fearful sight. It will be as if a sword pierced me through and through. But for all that, I can do naught but long, and say, "Strike! here is my poor doomed heart."

Was there not something once called "Our Father?"

Yes! I cannot doubt it, and it contained a boundless and unlimited blessing. I gasp; I torture myself to repeat it; it seems as if it were on my lips, as if I needed only to say "Our Father," and the rest would follow. But I say it one time after another, twenty, aye, a hundred times, and can get no farther. Then I try and invert the words, but it is equally useless. I know well enough who this Father is. But he is no longer my Father. He belongs to me no more. No wonder, then, that I cannot get the blessed words forth. Still my soul cannot refrain from incessantly trying, and it wastes itself in its fruitless endeavours.

It is a good thing that we can choose our society here. I do not know how we could endure it, if we were obliged to associate with all the riff-raff, such as thieves, robbers, murderers, traitors, perjurers, and hypocrites, that one meets. Do not be disgusted at my using the word riff-raff. The prejudices of the world, its customs and loose expressions, still cling to us, and we cannot, however much we wish it, get rid of them. True! we are riff-raff altogether, I know that well enough. There is no more perceptible difference between us and the

vulgar herd, than consists in our more developed consciousness, the shadow of the more refined education we received in the world. However, imagination does not do so little after all, and if it was of importance in the world, here it is all in all. Our misdeeds may be fully as bad as those of the multitude, but they are not so gross; indeed, in a great measure, they are quite refined. Therefore, we speak now, as of old, of the rabble, and pick our company as well as we can. The rabble, as I said, consists of thieves, robbers, murderers, and of all kinds of low villains; while amongst us, seducers, gay people, the covetous, the haughty, and all kinds of knaves are to be found, that is to say, quite respectable folk. Like naturally seeks like. Human nature in Hell is principally represented by sympathy. Indeed, this instinctive impulse is even more lively than ever amongst us.

Sensitiveness, as you can readily imagine, is the prevailing ingredient of life in Hell. Alas! so much the worse! Therefore we are very exclusive, and endeavour to keep everything unsuitable out of our social circle; and though it is a difficult matter, yet we are very particular (nice is, perhaps, a better expression) in this respect. Not only do we *chassez* what is mean and vulgar, but even what is

ugly and repulsive, without respect of persons; so fine, so excruciatingly fine, are our powers of perception.

Some time ago, a pretty young woman came here, a little coarse and unrefined, perhaps, but only the more attractive from her deficiencies. Her history is told in a few words. She had deserted her old blind mother to follow her lover, a harum-scarum circus rider, through the world. She died suddenly in the midst of the intoxication of her passion, consequently she lifted up her eyes in torments. She glows, shakes and trembles with anxiety and nervous fear as we do, and she is a prey to a pining desire. She pines for her mother whom she will never see again; and for her lover, whom she is looking for with the most eager expectation. Still she loves him. Dare she then hope that he will come? She cannot help nourishing the cruel wish. In it consists her sole, aye, her sole hope. And, moreover, come he must, they have sworn to be eternally true to each other. But she may have to wait long.

Meanwhile he, the noble one, is never out of her thoughts; he is the hero of all her dreams. She sees him naturally, as she saw him the last time, in all the enjoyment of youth, beauty, and strength, in glittering

attire, on the prancing steed, the admiration of the assembled multitude.

At length he comes, but hobbling on crutches, with running eyes, and tottering knees. All passion, all pleasure, has long since died out in him.

What a meeting! What a recognition!

She shudders at the distorted image of her precious, her incomparable one. But still she cannot help lavishing her caresses on him. In vain he pushes her aside; in vain does he seek to fly away: she hangs over him; where he goes there she is present. In short, the case became so repulsive that we could endure it no longer. The young woman had hitherto been one of us, but we were obliged to get rid of her, so it was not long before the pair had to move off.

Not long ago, another woman came here, young no longer, but still attractive; one of those blue-eyed, auburn-haired, languishing beauties which Germany only can produce.

And the reason of her coming to Hell?

Well, there was none other reason but her excessive devotion to her husband. It was touching to hear how she had sacrificed everything for him. And he proved unworthy of her love. Her sin was that she had sacrificed too much for him, yes, far too much; not her-

self alone, and all the world besides, but even God. Yes! she had set up her husband in God's place, and he had been her idol. Great though her affection was, it was a false essence; lovely and touching as it appeared, it was at bottom but an intensified, egotistical propensity.

In Hell she is consumed by pining after her husband. In life she knew but one feeling; therefore she knows now but one torment, excepting, of course, inevitable remorse. At length her husband comes, the villain, with a heart occupied by another passion!

Is she not severely punished? Even in Hell she excites commiseration, and her case creates a great impression. But high society in Hell could not exist if it did not pay some regard to decorum. On these matters we are inflexible. Of course it is only the shadow of decorum I am referring to.

Perhaps you will say it must be a great advantage to be able to pick one's company in this way. Yes, it certainly is an advantage; but, alas, my friend, there is nothing in Hell but what results in misery. This power of selection, therefore, is extremely painful; for we feel well enough that at bottom it is vanity —a mere form, into which we endeavour to transfuse reality.

I spoke just now about remorses! They are

numberless; but they compose only one moiety of our torments; the other is made up of lusts more ardent than ever, because, without a body, without a world, they cannot be appeased.

Could you believe it, I still sigh after that wench—she was certainly very pretty—whom I once took off the very doorsteps, and who repaid me so badly by preferring the boy to the man, and in becoming Martin's wife, or, rather, mistress? I am full of a passion, the like of which I have never felt before. And so it is in all respects. I pine after amusement, good living, old habits, empty honour—aye, even sordid meat and drink. I have no longer any stomach, and yet I pine to get it filled.

Everything is pain, continuous pain!

There is only a moment in our existence when all envious longings, all passions, in a word, everything in us, all our thousand pains, rest awhile. (Oh! but do not think we are free from pain!) Our ordinary pains certainly lose power, but an indescribable anguish comes in their stead. Now and then, for instance, a horrible dread runs through Hell, a kind of fearful panic, the like of which the world has never known. Everything is arrested in its course, stiffens, becomes mute, and trembles and quakes. Something awful is occurring. We do not see it, but we feel it, and we all

know what it is. It is Satan reviewing the souls in Hell. As yet he has no power over a single one of us, for judgment has not yet been pronounced. But he can wait. He rejoices at our increasing numbers. He resembles the shepherd who takes delight in looking at his flock, though the time for slaughter is not yet come. He knows that sooner or later a numberless flock will stand on the left of the Almighty's throne, and that this herd is his to all eternity.

We see nothing; but we feel and shudder. Meanwhile, the flock is aware of the proximity of the wolf. And yet at times one can see, when the horrible dread, for instance, occurs on that night which we call the Night of Death. What is to be seen I know not; I have never experienced it, and it would be worse than foolish to tempt any one to speak of it.

In my youth I was many a time on the road to become a good, christianlike, pious individual. But each time it dissolved itself into nothing. The recollection of it has something very sad, and yet inexpressibly touching about it. It was Lili who chiefly was the instrument of this mercy of God, which so unhappily, so shamefully came to naught. From the very first time I ever cast my eyes

upon her, she obtained a hidden, inexplicable mastery over me. Do not say directly it was my evil lusts and passion that brought me under its influence. Nay, it was something better; it was a hallowed power. All children, I think, possess it more or less; but Lili possessed it in its fulness.

In winter-time after dinner was over we used to sit round the fire before the lights were brought in. My mother generally took her *siesta*, while Lili and I gave up ourselves to reverie. In what totally different regions our fancies hovered! I could sit for hours watching her as she sat on a low stool in the full glare of the cheerful fire. I was in the dark, and could not be seen, and this made my enjoyment the greater.

Generally, she would sit with her hands clasped round her knee, her favourite posture in her reflective and speculative hours. How lovely she would look by this light! A little pale, perhaps, but all the more beautiful. The glare from the fire flickered on her large dark eyes. They had a wondrous brilliancy; their equals could nowhere have been found. Her delicate features seemed illumined. Now and then a deep-drawn breath or sigh would show how busy she was within. I almost devoured her with my glances. Had there been any

truth in the mystic doctrine of magnetism and sympathy she must have noticed it. Perhaps she did; for at times she would become very uneasy under my gaze, as if under the influence of some hidden but mighty power.

It all stands out so clear to my recollection. At such moments I felt tempted to start up and snatch her to my bosom. But I did not do so; had I frightened her, all my pleasure would have been lost.

But sometimes she would sit by my side, and we would pass the hour in a low, confidential conversation.

"What!" you exclaim; "what conversation of an interesting nature could possibly take place between you and her?"

Yes! you may well ask. But it was she who interested me.

One evening I asked her what she was thinking of, as she sat steadfastly looking into the fire.

"What am I thinking of?" she repeated, in her soft tone. "Yes, of nothing, but that I am thinking. It seems as if I had flown far, far away to a foreign land over the mighty seas—yes, to another world beyond the sky. Sometimes, I even lose myself in my flight. I fly to Louisiana, that lovely land, where everything is so different to this; much richer,

larger, and more beautiful, and where the sad winter is a thing unknown. There stands a house on the banks of a large river, with pilastered hall and verandah beneath the shade of pine trees and planes. I traverse the lofty saloons, but they are empty: my parents are not there. I hurry through the garden, through the grove, across the meadow, but can find no abiding place. No one will recognise me. Dark forms flit across my path, and I pause to ask them questions, but they all shake their heads sorrowfully at me, and hurry by.

"Heart-broken I turn away from the beauteous but desolate spot, and fly back again over the sea. Unwearied I go from land to land, seeing many wondrous things, and exchanging in my flight words with many remarkable and amiable persons. But wherever I am there is something I miss. Then I soar up higher and higher in my impetuous flight above the clouds, aye, above the moon and the stars. All at once I find myself in the most lovely garden. I had thought nothing could surpass Louisiana, the home of my birth; but this is far, far more beautiful. It is Paradise; God's own garden. There at last I find my parents: I knew well enough I should meet them again. There, too, I find peace; there is nothing more to long after. My father and

mother tell me how happy they are, and how dearly they love me.

"It makes me so vexed when the servant comes in with the candles, for it seems as if I had suddenly fallen down from a great height, and the earth had struck me a violent blow. I feel dazed, and have to bethink myself where I am. I feel so weak and poor, and everything around me appears wearisome. Do you understand me, Otto?"

Yes; I understood her well enough. They were downright foolish dreams. These evening hours did her no good: but of course I did not say so.

Another evening as we were sitting together she suddenly asked me:

"Otto, what is it necessary to have to make one happy?"

The question took me by surprise, but I quickly recovered my composure, and answered in a prosaic manner:

"A pious heart, good health, a good establishment where there is no want; finally, a choice of pleasures, and some nice people to love one."

"I have all this and more; am I happy then?"

"Yes; are you not, dear Lili?" I asked in astonishment.

"I do not know," she answered, thoughtfully. "I want something, if I could only say it out. I am of no use or joy to any one in the whole world."

"How can you talk so? Are you not a joy to mother and to me?" And as for the rest, of what use can a little girl like you be in the world? She should be diligent; should grow up and learn to be good and religious, so as to be able to be of use some day, and to fulfil her destination. But, as I said, are you not a great joy to me and my mother?"

"You do not stand in need of me; but there are so many who do stand in need."

"And so do we, Lili; every one stands in need of love."

Lili quietly shook her head.

"What can I be to either of you, Otto? She is your mother, and you her son. But what am I? In truth I belong to nobody. You found me, and took me in, and that is all."

"What are you? First and foremost, you are my dear little friend, whom I would not part with for a kingdom, are you not?"

"Little friend? Yes; what is that?" she added, after a short reverie.

"Shall I tell what a little friend is? She is a dear, tender little being that has given

one, not her heart alone, but her life; who wishes for nothing more than to bear all one's sorrows; who can make one smile in trouble, and at other times can almost make one weep for joy. Yes; a little friend is the greatest treasure to be found on earth."

Lili looked at me in amazement.

"I do not quite understand you," she said.

"Never mind; some time or other you will. But directly I ask you, will you be my sweet little friend?"

She reflected a moment, and then raising her pretty head, looked earnestly into my eye, and said firmly: "Yes; I will be your little friend; I shall be something then!"

"Yes—more than you are aware of, Lili," I answered.

Thenceforth there was a precious little secret between us. Often and often when I passed by her, or when I went out, I would whisper, "My own dear little friend!" and she would smile at me with such an angelic smile, as she whispered back in return,

"And my friend too."

How delightful it was to sit by her side thus in the quiet evening hours, stroking her silky hair, or playing with her luxuriant curls, or holding her little hand in mine. But—shall I own it?—I felt a kind of jealousy when, as

it often happened, she would fall into a reverie, in which probably I played no part.

One evening—it is quite wonderful with what accuracy I can recall everything, every word, aye, every look—one evening I asked her, "Do you really love me, Lili?" The very question which lovers delight in asking each other.

"Do I love you, Otto? What else could I do? I have neither father nor mother; there is none to care for me in the wide world but you and aunt. Should I not, then, love you with all my heart and soul?"

"I know that, Lili; but could you not learn to love me still more than you do now?"

"Perhaps!" she answered, thoughtfully.

She was but eleven or twelve years old then. At that age children give free vent to their thoughts; and so could Lili at times, like a true child that she was; but her conversation was very different from that of other children. Not only was she thoughtful, but I may say profound, in her answers. Her words, therefore, had an extraordinary weight, and there was a sincerity about them that went straight to the heart.

"Perhaps!" she repeated, and fell into a reverie. "What shall I do, then, for you to love me more? You see, Otto, I have no father or mother; but God's word teaches me that I

have brothers and sisters without number. Yes . . . but I do not know them; and they do not know me. I am but a child, in whom no one places confidence, and who can do so very little in the world. But you, Otto, you have power and opportunities, and you go far about. Will you, then, make me a promise?—Whenever you find any of my poor brothers and sisters in suffering, take compassion on them, and be kind to them for God's sake and for mine. Or if you will be truly dear, go out of your way to find them; and when able, take me with you, that we may visit them together, and speak kindly to them, and comfort them as well as we are able. I have thought long about it; but I did not know till now how to get it out. . . . Will you promise me that? Only promise it, and you shall be my dearest friend on earth!"

The tears had welled up into my eyes. It was my turn to be thoughtful now.

"If I do what you wish, Lili, will you love me much, much more than you do now?"

"Otto! I cannot tell you how much!"

"Then I will promise you on my sacred word. But you, my darling little sister, must be happy; and not think so much about such sorrowful things. Now look at me, and let me see how happy you can look."

And she looked up at me, and smiled with an expression of such transcendent joy beaming in her face, as if I had given her the whole kingdom of earth, and of heaven too.

Do you not, then, plainly see that I was in a fair way to become a good man—or let me say a man—in my intercourse with this child? And though at first the motive that attached me to her was a vain, yes, an unworthy one; still so great is the power of holiness and of goodness in the world, even in a poor weak child, that I was on the point of yielding to its hallowed influence. I actually did see after Lili's poor brothers and sisters. From that time it was my great object to be able to exercise compassion. There was no need to do violence to my nature; for by nature, I dare venture to say, I was good-hearted and well-disposed. Not only did I do what good I could at Lili's bidding, but actually found a pleasure in doing it.

And so we used to sit together of an evening, chatting confidentially to each other. I would tell her what I had been able to do for this one, or for that; draw a picture of the wants and necessities of the poor creatures, and describe the way in which I had relieved them, and their joy and gratitude. Oh! how her face would brighten up! Sometimes, too,

I would take her with me into the abodes of misery, and find delight in putting myself entirely at her disposal. It was truly wonderful how well she knew how to do the right thing.

But—need I say it?—I did not become a better man for all this. The spirit, indeed, was put in motion, and had taken a little portion of the heart into its service; but the flesh was too strong. It was but a transient excitement. The world held me too completely in its power. What Lili had educed in me, became merely a little pastime with good intentions, and no more.

When we parted, and I was travelling in foreign countries, I still took upon myself to see after the unhappy for Lili's sake. But it was merely a kind of idolatrous homage to a precious recollection; a recollection of her, the sweet little creature, who one day would be mine, aye, was mine already. But how ever could I have filled up my letters to her had I not done so? I knew that nothing would captivate her so much. I deceived her, perhaps deceived myself too; but God cannot be deceived.

One day I found her in tears. She was sitting with her hands folded across her bosom; one by one the pearly drops trickled down her cheeks. Her Bible lay open before her.

"Dearest Lili, what is amiss?" I exclaimed. "Why are you so sad?"

She raised her eyes. They beamed through her tears. Drying them hastily she answered:

"I am not sad, dear Otto!"

"But you are crying?"

"Not from sorrow, but from joy," she said, pointing with her finger to the open Bible. "See what I have found!"

I bent down over the book and read from the Psalms:

"When my father and my mother forsake me: the Lord taketh me up."

I did not know what to say, but stood regarding her with a variety of thoughts running through my heart. I felt moved; what else could I be? But, on the other hand, I liked this Bible reading just as little as if she were constantly pining after her parents, when she had me and my mother. But I did not deem it advisable to allude to these topics.

I therefore let it pass; merely saying, "Yes, they are beautiful words, and seem as if they were expressly written for you, Lili. But you must not cry; no, not even from joy. . . Come, be cheerful once more; I shall be back in a quarter of an hour, and then we will go out together."

When I returned she was quite cheerful and

happy after her old quiet way; her heart and spirit beaming forth in turns.

But those words, "The Lord hath taken me up," were engraven in her heart from that day forth; and she neither would nor could conceal it. They even gave me food for reflection; but it was a mere passing thought, and they quickly vanished.

Moods like these were not good for her, and I took all possible pains to divert her thoughts. But Nature understood best how to help herself. By degrees she grew out of them, and became stouter-hearted and more cheerful. She was simply a thoughtful warm-hearted child, whose feelings and fancies, naturally lively and excitable, had found a rich nourishment from her lonely and desolate condition. And she was a Creole; not merely an orphan, but without a country; a flower in a strange soil, where it must grow as best it could.

CHAPTER XI.

AMUSEMENT! It is one of the standing countersigns of the world. And yet there is nothing intrinsically evil in it. A fool and an idiot he who lets the fountain of pleasure well up in vain. But to think only of amusement in a life that is so serious and has such great claims; in which there is so much to be done; which is so full of need and want, is an absolute evil; and to this the world seems to have come.

"How shall I amuse myself?" is a question that daily goes the round of the world, in hundreds and thousands of rings. The world may forget to pray for its daily bread; but to pray after a fashion for its amusement, it never forgets that. Amusement before everything is its morning and evening prayer. People will amuse themselves, even though there be not a crust of bread in the cupboard, nor a shirt to the back;—yes, though father and mother should be lying on their bier. People will

amuse themselves, how ever sad, how ever depressing their circumstances; aye, even under the greatest calamities,—such as failure of crops, pestilence, bankruptcy, civil oppression, or the destitution and destruction of their fatherland! Yes, it is a matter of experience, that just in such critical times as any of these, there are more amusements, more dissipations, to be found in large towns than at any other period.

It has not always been so. Even fifty years ago it was very different. At that time work was the main object people lived for. Still, even then they would amuse themselves; it is a natural consequence, and follows as a matter of course. But they were content with a moderate diversion as the wages of their work. Now, indeed, it has become the one aim and end of life!

Yes, only fifty years ago! The hankering after amusement has grown with prodigious rapidity and strength. It is a frightful moral epidemic that has visited the world; a sickness abounding with wild fantasies, bordering on the very threshold of madness. It bodes ill! When games and theatres became the main, the vital object of Greece and Rome, those nations were near their downfall; and the same phenomenon will be repeated. What will the end of it be? What

the end will be in the world, I know not; but there is an end here in Hell, that is certain. Those fickle-minded, vain crowds, who only seek after amusements, have but one thing left when all worldly amusements fail—the torments of Hell!

Yet, let me not mislead you: if anywhere amusement is sought after, it is here, but, of course, in a distorted way. What was a sin in the world, here becomes a torment. However extensive the places of amusement in the world, they cannot be compared to what is to be found here.

We have, therefore, our Tivoli: give it any other name if you please, it is all one: for as the place itself comprehends all kinds of senseless amusements, so does it include every foolish name connected with it.

When the newspapers announce, with a loud trumpeting, that Tivoli, or Valhalla, or Alhambra, or Elysium, have been visited by ten, twelve, or fifteen thousand persons; what is that? In our Valhalla they stream in by hundreds of millions daily. Evidently, therefore, all the juggleries of the world, all its follies, its glittering shows, are congregated here; and what is more, all evil vices and passions are let loose, like so many wild beasts within the bars of their dens. Merrily, wildly

it goes on; desperately merrily! You cannot tell whether you are on your head or your heels; whether you are yourself or another person; whether you are alive or dead: you are torn along, tossed about. Aye, it is terrible merriment, and yet quite, quite noiseless.

On emerging from it you are so bewildered, so spent; as weak, as if you had been incessantly purged for a fortnight; so weary, so disgusted with yourself and everything else, so broken down and exhausted in mind, as if you had suffered from all the fatigues of *ennui* for a year and a day. But none the less can you help partaking in it again, whether you will or no, and again straining every nerve, again be bewildered, and confused without a shadow of enjoyment or satisfaction. Our Tivoli, then, is a kind of prison-house, calculated to prosecute amusement, pleasure, frivolity, and wantonness; and it fully succeeds. How those souls that formerly shunned work now pine for a little employment! Even the meanest, most ignominious labour,—aye, even slave labour,—they would deem the greatest boon.

But the night has come when no work can be done.

I often ask myself many questions, and this especially among the number,

"Have you really ever loved?" And I have

arrived at the mournful result that I never knew what love was. My childhood cannot be taken into account here; for the feelings of childhood are as undefined as they are sincere. It only refers, therefore, to a riper age. And here, in the first place, a mark must be placed against everything that was merely lust and passion; and next against everything that was only pure selfishness: so that there is but little left. At the very most, there can only be mention made of my love to my mother, to Lili, and to Martin.

My mother! Yes, undoubtedly I loved her. I love her still. I admired her with all my soul. Not without good reason did I look up to her as an exception to the world, as a pattern to her sex, as a model of perfection. She never did what was wrong; no word ever escaped her lips which she had cause to repent. No one could ever accuse her of any dereliction of duty, of any breach of decorum. Religious and good, she ever had the fear of God and of man steadfastly before her eyes.

Yes, I loved her! But to speak honestly there was a coldness in my love, a certain lacking of spirit and of warmth. It cannot be ascribed to selfishness alone, which even in this connection was the fundamental principle of my affection. Doubtless it had its origin in

that authority she held over me from my earliest to my latest days. And this control she swayed perfectly. Duty, right, decorum, to which she could ever refer, were like so many stakes in my flesh, by which she could transfix me to any spot she wished. Certainly, it was but a moral power, and so far a legitimate one; but there was something suffocating, almost killing about it.

Better had she referred everything to love. But her affection to me, great though it was, had, I fear, the same failing as mine; there was a coldness in it, something clammy about it. I cannot express it differently. And after all I dare not scrutinize her motives, as I would aught else. Enough that she was my mother; though there certainly is some doubt whether self-love did not constitute the principal ingredient of her love. I have too good reason to suppose so when I look at myself.

And then, my love to Lili!

Nay, it was not mere passion, nor was it mere selfishness. No, no, I say, far from it. There was really a heart in my affection. I would willingly have gone through fire and water for her. It was not, therefore, sensual love that was the cause of my attachment to her. And, indeed, I gave up a great deal for her sake. Not only did I control myself, but I denied myself

many things on her account. Still it must be allowed I did so with an eye to the reward I hoped to reap. I was like a man whose mouth waters after a fruit, but who lets it remain on the stalk till it is perfectly ripe.

But still I can with perfect truth speak of my love to Lili. It was her spirit that held me fast and controlled me. She could have made me anything she pleased—even a good and religious man. It was not her fault I did not become one. For there was a something essential wanting in my love to her. There was plenty of flame; but light—ah! light was wanting.

And lastly, Martin!

I loved him too. There was at least a fourth part of real good in my affection to him; the other three I allow were made up of self-love. I loved him especially, because I had succeeded in making him the exact counterpart of myself; because he grew up to be me over again. I loved him as my own creation, over which I had absolute control. Therefore I pressed him one moment to my heart, and the next spurned him under foot. But I will not talk any more about it; I am ashamed of it. . . . Ah! if I could only escape by feeling ashamed!

What then did I lack? Why could I not love like other men, with a genuine love?

It is no longer a secret to me!

God's love had not yet dawned upon me: God's love manifested in the fulness of time. Truly, one can only love with the love of God. True love is ever divine. In God it has its source; in Him its goal. Only in God is love able to deny itself, to suffer, to hope, and to endure until death.

There is a tradition current in the kingdom of Death about God's Son, who once preached in Hell, and released the prisoners, and filled up the abyss between the place of torment and Paradise. Then it was light in Hell; still the greater number were hardened, and relapsed into darkness.

An ardent longing seized me to speak with some one who had heard God's Son preach. It was foolish, I allow. In torment every impulse, be it good or evil, must end in vanity. We are perfectly aware of it, and yet experience makes us no wiser. We begin over and over again to meditate, to desire, to conceive, and strain every nerve to clothe our thoughts in reality.

I found people, it is true, who had heard that Divine sermon, but naturally only the lost. Lost people are not a people. If they had only retained a single word of the Saviour's discourse they would not now be

in torment. The absurdity is palpable. I got one or two of them to speak, but it was all a medley of nonsense and of blasphemy; so at last I was obliged to relinquish my desire.

But still I ventured out on a longer excursion through Hell. I say ventured, for it really does require an amount of courage to throw one's self thus among the herd. This serpentine swarm—I do not know that I can use a better expression—is in truth frightful, even for one who has nothing to fear, and nothing to lose.

You must not expect any detailed description of what I saw and experienced; it would carry me to too great a length. For of what interest would it be to you to be conducted through these swarming motley crowds of thieves, murderers, cheats, and liars, forgers, and of the numbers who have cursed themselves into Hell; of wicked children and bad parents; wicked husbands and wives, who cannot get rid of each other; of sinners against nature of all kinds; hypocrites, false witnesses, adulterers, traitors, &c.?

But stop! It is too ludicrous a spectacle. Who are those queer-looking fellows? Turkey-cocks under human forms. These are the arrogant, the haughty. They belong to the scum of Hell, and are always to be found in a swarm. Everybody takes delight in kicking them out.

And those wretched women, with those wild, languishing glances, with those deep, longing sighs; what do they remind me of?

Of a hen who has lost her chicks. In vain she clucks and spreads her wings. Lost is lost! These are wicked mothers, doomed to long after their poor, neglected, ill-used children.

But who are those strange persons that seem to be constituted of a melting nature, with soft hearts melting with sympathy? They go about in crowds, offering their help and assistance. With puling manners they rub up against every one, and stick fast where they can.

These are the merciless. Once their hearts were too hard; now they are too soft. One keeps all these adhesive sort of people as far as one can away. There is no one now who wants them.

Sundry forms and scenes shall now, as if spontaneously, spring into existence under my pen. With that you must be content.

I would cross the dark river. But when I came to the ferry I found a lake or rather a morass before me instead of a river. The stream had suddenly overflowed its banks, and had thrown its putrid, slimy mire far and wide. The stench was enough to suffocate one. The

cause of this fearful flood soon became generally known when we got a copy of the well-known "Missionary Intelligencer," in which the startling progress Christianity had made in China, Japan, and India, was blazoned forth to the world. One bouncing falsehood like this is quite enough to make the river rise and overflow its banks. Do not misunderstand me. I have nothing to say against a true missionary spirit, which humble in heart performs its work in quietness. But there is another, a counterfeit one, which the world has taken by the hand. This is it which makes use of trumpets. The world is and remains only a charlatan.

There was a large concourse of people assembled at the ferry. Some evidently, like myself, wished to cross over, but determined to wait till the waters had subsided. But the greater number had come on account of the mud.

You must have heard the street boys in the world calling out, "Look at the mud!" We say the same here. What is interesting before everything? In the world it only needs a gutter to run over to collect a crowd. How then about a river running over, and that the black river? Do not hold your nose. It was just the stench that brought all these people together.

As I would not wait, and as I neither shared in the prevailing taste for the interesting, I

went higher up the stream. It was indifferent to me where I crossed over. Higher up, the river ran in a deep channel, and there were but few traces of the flood visible. Both banks were thickly studded with villas in every conceivable style. In Hell fabulous buildings are everywhere the order of the day. It is so easy to give one's imagination free scope, and here it is the only thing to be done. Let us but imagine a thing, and, how ever bad it be, it immediately exists. Meanwhile it does not take place without entailing suffering; for it is impossible to tell how this straining of the imaginative powers harasses and enervates the soul.

But these country seats and places of amusement on the banks of the black river are the most romantic I have ever seen. I began to think of the —— river. Were these villas on the slimy, stinking banks an imitation of those on the —— river? If they were, then I must say they were a very bad imitation. Buildings, gardens, statues—all can be conjured forth; but the situation by the river does not apparently enhance the beauty of the scene.

I passed through several towns, large and small. Wonderful enough, the black river, like the rivers in the world, exercises a certain attractive power. Its banks are more thickly

populated than any other part of Hell. And yet there are long, waste extents. Perhaps it is only imagination, but the desolateness of the place seemed more fearful than anywhere else. And yet—who can account for a human soul? —I remained here much longer than I needed to have done.

I was sitting musing over my evil plight on a low rocky ledge overhanging the river, whose sluggish putrid waters rolled lazily on under my feet. The old fables about the river Lethe came into my mind. Alas! mere fables! There is no oblivion after death. If there were such a river from whose waters one could quaff a draught of oblivion, there would then be no place of torment in Hell. Consciousness, memory, these are our bitter torments. In the world there used to be a momentary, a partial forgetfulness of self. Nothing like it exists here.

I fancied I heard some one groan. I rose to my feet, and a strange sight met my eye. He was a man of stately form; not so his posture. For he was squatting down by the water washing his hands. They were covered with blood; but the more he washed them, the more bloody did they become, so that when he held them up out of the water, the great drops fell off them. It was horrible!

He knew very well that I was behind him,

for all at once he turned round without further introduction, and asked me the question, "What is truth?"

I started, and for a moment was unable to utter a word in reply. Strange questions like that cannot, at all events, be answered in an off-hand way. With an impatient expression on his face and in his voice he again asked,

"What is truth?"

I replied, "It is a truth that it is too late to inquire what truth is here!"

But the answer did not seem to satisfy him, for he shook his head and turned away, and again began eagerly to wash his bloody hands.

I tried to get him into conversation, but it was useless. I could not doubt, therefore, but that here was one of those wretched beings before me, who once had stood face to face with the Son of God, had conversed with Him, and had had His life in their hands. I burned with eagerness to get him to speak; but all my pains were thrown away. So at last I left him.

Who could it be? It scarcely needed one look at the long robe with the purple border, and the ring on the finger, to feel certain that it was none other but Pontius Pilate, once the Roman governor of Judea!

When he has not anything to do in the Jewish capital he is always to be found crouching down by the river side washing his hands. And when any one passes by him, he turns round and asks, "What is truth?" And everybody is obliged to give him an answer to his question. But he ever shakes his head; no one can tell him. For the question does not refer to truth in the concrete, but to abstract, absolute truth. Nobody knows anything about it here.

Do you not see the striking anomaly? Pilate asking about truth, while he is washing his hands in the mire and mud of falsehood.

I crossed over and passed through desert tracts; I mean uninhabited tracts, but not un-betravelled ones. There is not a spot in Hell, how ever wild and desolate it be, that is not well traversed. Some spirits, indeed, seem to seek just these very places.

Here the wild hunter is to be found, not only the hunter of popular tradition, but numberless others. Countless are they who, in different ways, pass their whole lifetime in hunting after a miserable bit of meat, or after a still less worthy object—after a phantom, an idea, or even after nothing at all, but merely for the pleasure of moving quickly. Before they are aware they stumble into their graves, and find themselves in Hell's torments.

Here, too, those who cherish all kinds of sinister, misanthropical notions, or have committed crimes against which all human nature, evil or good, revolts, may be seen stealing along. Loneliness is a necessity to them. Were there a solitary place, no matter how frightful it might be, many would flee thither to shun contact with their fellows.

There is one of these forms which, once seen, is never forgotten. He is of a gigantic and towering stature, half naked, clad only in the skin of some wild beast. A thick, tangled mass of hair covers his head and hangs down over his eyes. There is a wild, glowering, and scowling look about him. On his forehead there is a fearful brand. He carries a huge club in his hand, not, however, for self-defence, for he is continually on the flight, fearful lest any one should kill him. Every one who meets this frightful apparition cannot repress a shudder. Still he flees from the weakest and smallest; always flying, ever alone. It is one of the greatest rarities ever to see him in company with any one. Nowhere and yet everywhere—an exile on earth, an exile in Hell.

It is CAIN!

I hurried away, and as he did the same we were soon out of each other's sight.

Here, then, I had met one who was even

more wretched than myself. A murderer, a fratricide; and I was not an outlaw among the outlawed. But I did not derive any personal consolation from the fact. My funeral sermon, unhappy recollection, was too firmly engraven on my memory for that. There is nothing more calculated to mortify egotistical feelings than a sermon such as mine was. But I have forgotten to tell you about it.

In the very first town I came to by the river, I almost stumbled over my own funeral sermon. I fell into the hands of an old ballad woman, once a Prima Donna and Improvisatrice, who would let me have no peace till I had seen some of her "bran new" songs.

Whether she knew me I cannot say. But amongst her collection I found, and started back just as if some one had given me a violent blow on the head, a song bearing the following title:—

"A BRAN NEW AND MOURNFUL DITTY
ABOUT MR. OTTO N.—*primus inter pares*,
Who had paid for the best Hearse and best Parson
IN ORDER TO GET INTO PARADISE,
BUT WENT TO HELL.
Motto (his Reverence's own words): 'We shall meet again.'"

My funeral sermon, here in Hell; and in verse too!

I ground my teeth and began to read.

First, there was a fulsome laudation over my virtues, especially those which I never possessed, and a corresponding estimate of the loss society had undergone by my death. A feeling of nausea came over me. Thereupon the sermon went on to sketch the blessed state into which I had now entered, as a reward for my labours; dwelling on the joy, the peace, and splendour which henceforth were evermore my lot.

What cutting, cruel irony!

It seemed as if my heart was pierced by a hundred knives. It was more than I could endure. I flung the trashy thing from me, and rushed away gnashing my teeth with anguish. A long time elapsed before I recovered from the effects of this infernal dose. But never shall I be able to obliterate from my mind the recollection of the miserable wretch that his Reverence, Mr. ——, held such a brazen-tongued funeral sermon over.

Oh, what a good, pious fool, or else hypocrite, you must be! As if a man needed only to die to become a spirit in Heaven! . . . But yet——I will not repeat the hope and wish to which you gave utterance. You knew not what you were saying,

"We shall meet again!"

CHAPTER XII.

On this excursion I saw a king for the first time in Hell; a piteous sight! No greater contrast between the past and the present—the then and the thereafter—can be conceived.

Princes, kings, emperors, &c., occupy the most miserable of all positions in Hell!

Civil distinctions reckon as naught here. There is no connecting link between souls, saving the instinctive feeling of sociability, and the customs they have brought down with them from the upper world. Everything is jumbled one among another in endless confusion. No restrictions, no formalities, are recognised; no kingdoms, no constitutions, no ordinances are acknowledged. Hence it may be readily perceived that princes are a superfluity. Certainly their rank authorizes them to occupy a prominent position, at all events, in polite society. For everybody bows to rank here as of old. But they are too cast down, too miserable, to assert their rights; so they timidly keep in the background. They

are like images of saints from which the gilded surface has been worn off, and which have been thrown into the kennel, where darkness and filth reign supreme. Their greatness was merely conventional; in other words, the gilt was not pure gold; and now it is gone, leaving not a trace of majesty or of nobility behind.

Here they have no kingdom to experimentalize on; no people to tyrannize over; no finances to fritter away. They live and breathe merely in the mournful recollection of a power and a magnificence that have vanished. Out of all their numerous and glittering retinue, only one or two cringing courtiers remain, whom deep-rooted habit, not gratitude, binds to their person. I said they were bowed down. Aye, it is quite true; true to the letter. They are well-nigh sinking under the weight of the crown on their heads.

What does such a crown weigh? Answer me first another question—"How great is a monarch's responsibility in the world?"

Heavy are these crowns; hundreds of pounds in weight! Generally these exalted personages get a couple of their yeomen to support them under either arm, and as they thus shuffle piteously along, they present, need I add, a sorry pageant.

But worse still does it fare with those potentates who were styled "The Great" in the world. Ah! how little, how wretchedly little, are they now! In addition to the weight of their crowns, this unhappy sirname has superimposed an enormous extra weight, which well-nigh crushes them to the earth. Only with tottering knees, and additional help, are they able to drag themselves along, groaning piteously all the while.

Genuine great princes are naturally not found here. Those others the world sirnamed "The Great," either because they were cruel butchers, who had treacherously shed the blood of thousands of their fellow-creatures, and destroyed the happiness of twenty times as many others; or because they had distinguished themselves by a crafty, shameful policy, which broke through all the restraints of morality, and set at naught all humanity. Others were sirnamed "The Great" without any assignable reason. Circumstances proved favourable, and they were well served. Poor bunglers themselves, they were in general the maddest of all, and wished to have divine honours shown them. So they, too, had to go to Hell!

Oh! how far better would all these kings have acted, had they striven to earn for themselves the title "Much Beloved," instead of

that other, "The Great!" Love would have cloked over a multitude of their sins. Now their sighs and moans are vain. The utter hopelessness of the place of torment cannot be better expressed than in the following words; "Here love exists no more."

Never have I heard such sighs as those which proceed from these princes, kings, and emperors. It is a rarity to hear them speak; they only sigh. A sigh expresses all they would say. In every sigh one would suppose they must gasp their last.

It is easy to understand, then, that they are not a very presentable sort of people; and that they are shy, and prefer to keep themselves in the background.

One seldom meets any of them on a high-road. They could not get on there. For they are persecuted by all those whose prosperity they have destroyed, just as a hawk is pursued by tribes of small birds. They are exposed to blow after blow, and by flight they cannot save themselves. So they keep mostly to desert places, principally in the neighbourhood of the City of Unrighteousness, where the only prospect of a kingdom or a principality is open to them.

To this same class also belong the pretenders. Anything more starved looking,

more utterly miserable, and, at the same time, more rapacious than these pretenders cannot be imagined. They resemble famishing wolves, which prowl about singly, full of the expectation of finding a rich, fat prey. But fat baits are rare even in the best parts of the world!

Unhappy kings, so miserable in themselves, and so persecuted into the bargain, the nervousness from which they suffer is still almost their worst suffering! Suddenly a terrible shout is heard: "A Pretender, a Pretender!" and the courtiers instinctively crowd around their king and master. A battle ensues, as ridiculous as it is horrible. But understand me, nothing is really laughable in Hell; it is grievous altogether. With savage impotence the pretender dashes through the throng to tear the crown from off the king's head. The wretched man cannot even defend himself; he is too abject, too bowed down. But his guards do not desert him; they fight as if for dear life. Bravely they fence, something like a hare with her fore-paws; and the pretender is hurled back with ignominy, and has to slink off without the crown.

Thus you will see that if there is anything even still more miserable than kings, it is the pretenders.

And how happy many of these wretched beings might have been! What an enviable life they might have led! Fortune had blessed them from their birth in preference to millions. They possessed what in common *parlance* is termed wealth; they had exalted rank, and were amongst the respected and the honoured. But they could not be content with such a distinguished private life. They were seized with the delirium of ambition; a crown they must obtain. And to obtain it they plunged headlong into a course of life, in which they must needs lose all self-respect, and risk their fortune and their peace into the bargain. They must stoop to the most unworthy machinations, associate on the most intimate terms with the lowest of the low; and finally have the blood of thousands resting on their heads.

Naturally their so-called "divine right" was ever on their lips; and thus they strove to make themselves and others believe that it was in the service of righteousness they sacrificed themselves, and everything else besides. But this "divine right" was perhaps but the fabrication of a lying imaginative power, a *rechauffée* of old scandalous falsehoods, with a spice of new ones according to taste. At all events it would have been far better for them had they wrongfully encountered a happy

end, than with right on their side have entered upon the torments of Hell.

I spoke of human butchers! But it is not necessary to be either a king or an emperor to be a human butcher. Some of the greatest butchers the world has ever known have been ministers, governors, generals, &c., &c.

Here in Hell they continue their bloody career. I am thinking especially of the generals now. In the world, battles and slaughter constituted their pastime and their joy. Here the joy of course is gone, but the pastime remains. There is no lack of adherents to these notable leaders. They have a superfluous influx of all those whose pursuits were war and blood-shedding in contradistinction to that peace and love which God has had proclaimed to the world; not to speak of the countless herd that is without a master, and which congregates wherever an individual is seen towering above the mass, or wherever the sound of a trumpet or a drum is heard.

On the wide desert plains the armies set themselves in array, hundreds of thousands against hundreds of thousands. A battle is fought! With banners waving aloft, though with chattering teeth, they advance against each other. Empty game! The cannons belch out their smoke, but no report follows.

The stalwart columns press onwards. One would think a terrible crash must ensue; but all passes off in perfect silence. For no encounter really takes place. Instead of trampling on his foe, each man runs through him. It is indescribably stupid! No result, no victory is possible; nay, it is even an impossibility to gain ever so trifling an advantage. But, still, after the necessary breathing time, the same game commences anew. Vanity of vanities! It must be consuming work. It is not the heart's blood that flows in these contests, it is the spirit which bleeds itself to death, and yet never dies.

It made me think of the heroes of the Valhalla. But 'twas a foolish thought; there is no comparison between these and them. The heroes of the Valhalla moved in power and in glory; it is not only a real, but a perfected life they live, without any regrets. The heroes in Hell, on the contrary, are both laughable, and enough to make one weep; these heroes, with chattering teeth, their powerless blows, their endless, fruitless labours! But there is no one who either laughs or weeps at them.

I have just come from one such battle-field. Two renowned generals were opposed to each other, two of the greatest butchers recorded in

history. Though servants of the same kingdom at different times, they are far too powerful for Hell to hold them both at once. Therefore they live in continued enmity, and wage war after war against each other. But the result will ever be as it was just now. The battle was undecided. One of the generals rode by me on his return from the battle, distinguishable by the long plumes in his hat, and by the little grey horse he rode. Coming up to where I was standing he halted, and I heard him mutter between his clenched teeth, "I will burn him, and his whole crew!" I could imagine the other general muttering in his beard, "I'll hang him!"

In these remote wastes—a foolish expression where everything is a waste, but I have tried in vain to find a better one—one frequently stumbles on colonies of a certain mighty nation, which I will not mention expressly by name. I will blame no one. And this people by the side of great defects exhibit many estimable qualities. I never could make this remarkable nation out. The greatest contradictions seemed to be united in their character. By the side of bombast and the quaintest eccentricity they display the greatest solidity of character; with a puling sentimentality,

arrogance, and ostentation, an even, hearty nature; with falsehood and treachery, an exemplary uprightness and fidelity; and with a cowardly and oppressive spirit, a valiant and chivalrous disposition. After this definition you cannot fail to recognise it.

But notwithstanding all these opposite qualities, it is quite certain that they have a wonderful gift of making themselves detested wherever they go. Everywhere they will speak in a lofty strain, strike the key-note as it were, and seek to show their authority. They seem firmly to believe that they have been specially selected to civilize all the other nations of the world, to teach them what truth is, and what right is, what education consists in, and what morals are. Here they are just the same as of old. Everywhere they are running foul of some one or other, stirring up strife, and making themselves hated. But patience is not so enduring in Hell as in the world. They are driven, spurned away, and have to fly. From them proceed these numerous colonies; so insufferable a people is for the most part obliged to live alone. Hence the instinctive desire of emigrating and colonizing.

I think I understand now the meaning of these desert tracts. It is less probable that

the above-named people have chosen these places for building colonies in, than that they are the result of these colonies. The fact is, no one likes to have them for neighbours.

There is one speciality about this nation worthy of notice, namely, the number of literary notabilities it yields to Hell. I always knew that it was a nation of authors, and that there were few among its educated classes who had not attempted some branch or other of literature. But because a man writes, it is not, therefore, necessary that he should write himself into Hell. Still, the phenomenon can be explained!

With a large proportion, authorship is a kind of literary dawdling or toying, under which the recognition of the seriousness of life, little by little, falls to the ground. They live as good-for-nothings, as good-for-nothings they die; and, therefore, as a matter of course, come to Hell. With another large proportion authorship is a trade that is not only plied in the service of gain, but often of meanness, falsehood, and calumny. Naturally the result is the same.

Amongst these *literati* journalists undoubtedly occupy the foremost rank. True, there is this in common with the newspaper writers of all nations, that they are somewhat lax,

and not very particular about telling a lie now and then. But I fully believe that only in one country in the world is there to be found a press that has exhibited proofs of an organized system of lying. And in its time it has accomplished many great and remarkable things. It has given powerful support to false pretenders, created seditions, and has even paved the way for conquests. Naturally it had to do with the small and the weak; falsehood is ever cowardly. How there can be unity in such pursuits, and among so many, passes my comprehension; and yet, perhaps, it is not so difficult to understand after all. In this country the greater number of the journalists have their price, and are to be bought over either by flattery or by gold. The bribed ones band together, and the rest are gradually dragged along with them; it is so stupid, and withal so dangerous, to stand alone.

And there is another peculiarity about this great nation; now and then it is subject to a regular ecstasy. Now it rants about a popular "unification," though, not only in reality, but in all its ideas, it offers a spectacle of the most piteous disunity; now about liberty, though it slavishly worships and grovels in the dust before everything that is a little exalted; now it longs for a fleet, though it is a continental

nation, and on one side only has a very imperfect access to the sea. Now it will have a war in the Devil's name, and perform some exploit or other that has never been seen before; and, with this object in view, seeks out the weakest among its neighbours, whom it then distinguishes by the title of an "hereditary foe."

In short, when such a rapture comes over the nation, unity follows as a matter of course. All lie with one throat, and pervert everything in the most shameless manner. A thousand pens are set a scribbling along the road of falsehood to promote the magnificent enterprise. Not only is free scope given to the imagination, but, with a cool and clear consciousness, palpable facts are made away with. If, unfortunately, there are none in the way, so much the better, they can be made *ad libitum*; it is easy to invent a few!

The tendency—they call it the idea—is all in all to them, and, without the slightest hesitation, truth and honour are sacrificed to it.

Impudence has been created into a power by these persons. Only tell lie upon lie, and it is sure to answer. Certainly all these lies are not believed at once, but some importance is always attached to them; and, by daily repetition, even the most barefaced falsehoods are gulped down whole by the public. It then

becomes a fact, and serves as a foundation whereon others can be built.

The perseverance these people exhibit in their lying tendencies, is almost incredible. We have instances of their having lied continuously for fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years in succession, in order to carry a project through, which they have seen floating above them in the clouds. And see, the system triumphed!

Not only have they succeeded in carrying their own, but a large portion of mankind along with them. They either carried out, or very nearly carried out, everything they pleased. Over untoward events mortal man, of course, cannot prevail. I am not *au fait* in their method, and, therefore, am unable to say how many times a lie should be repeated to convert it into a fact; but, certain it is, that it eventually does become one after constant repetition.

By this time, therefore, it must be quite clear to you how it is that such an overwhelming number of the literary characters of this nation find their way down here. Some have sauntered along the road of literature, others have lolled into Hell. Amongst these last, the systematic liars are especially distinguishable. The journalists fare the worst

of all, in whom so great and so responsible a trust has been reposed. They became fat on lying in the world, and here they are literally basted in their own grease.

As you are aware, we all suffer from a parching thirst; we pine for a drop of water. Still it would hardly occur to us to slake our thirst in the slimy putrid waters of the black river. There are some, however, who have secretly tried it. So that in Hell there are people who are habitual tipplers. One often hears a person say to another, "'You have been drinking of the river then!" For, in reality they cannot conceal it. The traitorous lying stuff streams out again from all parts of their body; oozes out from every pore, in order to return to the river. Only the vanishing aliquot portion of the lying liquid, which adheres to the tippler, remains behind to add fuel to another burning thirst. So they slink down once again to the river to quaff off another dose. Thus, in a measure, the whole mass of water in the black river is gradually distilled through them. Eminent mathematicians have calculated that an ordinary drinker, reckoning after the earthly duration of time, would require 7213 years, 93 days, 11 hours and 39 minutes to empty it in. As yet no one has completed this course! A

more nauseous sight than one of these tippling journalists presents, cannot be conceived. And even this is not the worst; but I will say no more about them. There are things of which one cannot speak.

Of course there are beggars in Hell. But I lately chanced to stumble on some of the most remarkable beggars I ever saw, or rather they stumbled on me, and nearly succeeded in making an end of me. You could not possibly guess what their importunity consisted in—on nothing less than to baptize me. They besought me in the most whining terms to let them baptize me; possibly I might have given way, only that I had no use for that sort of thing. The more angry I grew, the more humble, but the more importunate, did they become. They would not take a refusal. That I ultimately escaped, I can only attribute to the fortunate circumstance that a more promising-looking convert fell in their way.

These beggars, the most miserable I have ever seen (I scarcely expect you to believe me), are missionaries. I do not know whether you have heard of the business-like way in which the holy missionary spirit discharges its office in the world. It is nothing but a chase after heathens; a regular hunt after the

little ones that have short legs, and who cannot defend themselves.

In their eyes learning is a matter of secondary importance; the road it marks out is too laborious. Baptism is everything; and the only question is, to find an opportunity of sprinkling water over as many heads as possible. So many heads, so many names are entered in the registers as converts to Christianity; and their number is then copied into the Missionary Journals, in order to fill the Christian world with amazement and acclamations of joyfulness. Of course it follows, as a matter of course, that the greater proportion of the baptized consists of children, who naturally grow up in masses without retaining the slightest recollection of the Christianity imparted to them.

These missionaries have to wander indefatigably about, beseeching people in the most importunate way to be baptized, begging as if life itself depended on it, in a manner that is quite heart-breaking. In truth, it is a thousand times a greater object with them now to get a baptism scratched out from the register, than ever it was to get one entered. For this purpose their register-books are always at hand; but it is but little success they meet with. Some are angry and uncivil to them,

believing that they wish to taunt them ; others laugh and make fun of them, as if it were a capital joke; while others, again, turn their extraordinary religious fervour into ridicule. Enough to say that, however smoothly their work went on in the world, here it is just as great drudgery. They have to retrace their steps along the very same road on which they travelled. But it is a road without an end! without a goal!

"Three is a lucky number," we used to say in the world. But it was often a lie from the hell of hells. No wonder, then, that this triple element often bothers one. Thus I know very well that God is a triune God, but to get three persons united under one head surpasses my powers. Do you understand? Tri-unity ever, as it were, falls to pieces before me. Further than to two persons I can never advance; for when I would name the third, alas, he is gone! In vain I rack my brains, it is as if heart and head would burst. Now it is God the Son ; now, God the Holy Spirit, that is wanting; and now . . . yes . . . I am very near to it . . . No! . . . it is useless . . . it is desperate!

There is also another trinity which sorely puzzles me. This, too, falls to pieces before

me, but not always. Faith, hope, and love. Do you see? But what is faith? What is hope? I know neither the one nor the other more. But what love is, I still know to my deep sorrow; and yet, no! I only know what it might have been.

Oh! that you would be warned! you who still walk in the light and in hope. Love is not a sport, an idle joke; it is life's most earnest reality. If I had ever rightly understood what love was, then faith and hope would never have failed me.

Oh! be warned!

My heart burns for you; mostly, it is true, from anguish, but still from love. For you, my silent friend, who have not answered with a single word to all my letters. For you, my mother, though my deepest sighs ever escaped your ear. For you, Martin, though you are the cause of my unceasing torment. What do you want with me? What have you to tell me? For all of you, all! Even from Hell I call you my brothers and sisters!

CHAPTER XIII.

I DO not recollect whether I told you that it is really a matter of perfect indifference what language we speak here. All languages are understood equally well among us. But the real state of the case is, there is no language, consequently no speech. The articulations we think we give utterance to are probably but imaginary on our parts, as everything else is; and we catch one another's meaning after a strange fashion, without any intermediate agency, which it is impossible for me to explain. Only one thing I know, that this method is so certain that we never—as was often the case in the world—misunderstand each other's meaning.

Human nature is pretty much the same everywhere. In Hell, therefore, a soul may also stand in need of solitude. It is often quite refreshing to me to get out of the throng, and to hie away to the desert tracts in this fright-

ful land; and when I get quite by myself it seems to me as if I could breathe more freely. I stop still, or else sink down, to give free admission to thoughts which come streaming in, or else occupy myself in fruitless endeavours to come to an understanding with myself. Need I add that this pleasure is not unaccompanied by pain; for the more conscious the spirit becomes the greater the pain that follows.

But it is a rare thing to find perfect solitude, even in these desert places. Some one or other is sure to intrude upon one, and then I am obliged to divert my thoughts. This compulsory companionship, however sore a trial it be to the patience, is frequently not unattended with interest, in so far, of course, as interest can exist here.

Thus, a little while ago I was bothered with a German Professor of History. But in order not to be too personal, allow me to state, *en passant*, that German professors may be most estimable persons, very learned, and, withal, kindly and amiable. Of course, there are exceptions.

My Professor was one of those who could deduce everything possible out of history, that either his own inclinations, or those of the people, or the pleasure or whim of a highly esteemed prince, might deem desirable.

Thus, if a small portion of a state conceive the idea of separating, and of forming an independent body by itself, they are able in the twinkling of an eye to discover some constitutional precedent out of the musty and mouldy archives to authorize rebellion. Or if an entire, or a half, or only a duodecimo prince, conceive a *penchant* for a particular parcel of territory, it is but a little matter to prove His Royal Highness's hereditary right and title to it. Nothing is impossible to their profound learning, when the fancy takes them, or gold allures them. They can change black into white in a twinkling, or white into black, and into white again, if necessary. In this last manipulation, indeed, their highest art consists. And, if the result which their profound investigations have discovered, and pronounced to be the absolute, unalterable truth, by some trick of fortune does not quite answer the expectations formed of it, without feeling the slightest discomposure they undo what they have done, and arrive at another result directly opposite to the former one, and pronounce it in turn to be every whit as absolute and unalterable a truth as the other was. It would be a sure sign of moral depravity to entertain the slightest doubt about it.

It is such people as these that have given

rise to that remarkable proverb, "There is a science in lying, as the Devil said when he was studying at the University of Kiel!"

Well, we sat and conversed together in this lonely place. Naturally I was the one to receive instruction, and I gave myself up with apparent credulity to be crammed full of all kinds of lies, the like of which never were heard on earth.

Presently, my attention was arrested by the appearance of two gigantic forms that emerged from out of the misty darkness, and approached us, with slow and measured steps, as if they would pass close by where we were sitting. They were walking arm in arm in brotherly confidence. But they presented a very incongruous pair. The form on the right I recognised instantly, even at a distance, though I had seen him but once before. It was Cain! The other, however, though of powerful build, seemed quite small by the side of Cain. I did not know him. He was dressed in the costly style of the middle ages, and in comparison with Cain's semi-nude condition, seemed to be smothered in clothes. He wore an ermine cape over his knightly habiliments. A massive gold chain, with a medallion attached, hung round his neck, and reached far down on his breast. Golden spurs glittered on his

boots, the tops of which hung loosely down. On his casque was a ring of gold, with pointed branches resembling a crown, and an enormous sword was girded round his loins. But though of commanding stature, and handsomely attired, there was a lack of nobility about him. He seemed to have a difficulty in walking, while Cain's uneven and irregular gait made it still more difficult for him to keep pace with his companion. In truth, a more dissimilar pair could not well be conceived, And yet there were many remarkable points of resemblance between them. Both had the same nervous, scowling look. Both had their brand mark; for as they passed us, I could see when Cain's companion raised his casque that the ring had left a bloody, glowing mark across the brow.

I could not repress a shudder; but after they had passed us some little distance the Professor whispered to me,

"Did you see that sharp-pointed stake which he had through him?"

I had not observed it.

"But there is one," continued the Professor, "though he takes all possible pains to hide it with a fold of his cloak. That is why he walks so lame."

"Who was it?" I inquired.

"It was Cain and Abel."

This answer puzzled me sorely. I got quite confused, and for a little while was quite unable to collect my thoughts. Surely Abel was Cain's innocent, murdered brother. Abel could not possibly be in the torments of Hell! And still less could Cain and Abel form a pair in Hell!

At last I got my thoughts so far in order that I was able to ask, "What Abel?"

"Abel, King of Denmark," was the reply: "died June 29, 1252."

Now it was all clear!

Still I knew but little about this Abel. But the German Professor knew all about it, and did not keep his knowledge to himself. He told me that "Abel had been one of Denmark's mightiest kings, one of those great geniuses which appear centuries before their time, and who are, therefore, misunderstood and wrongly judged. So was Abel by the stupid Danes. He was the first monarch on whose mind it had dawned that only by German civilization and favour, by a political and moral dependence on the great and powerful Germany, could there be any future for Denmark. But the stupid Danes either could not or would not see it. They hated them to the death; there was no accusation too base but they charged them

with it. So at last he was forced to yield, and he fell as one of the first and chiefest of martyrs to a holy cause,—Germany's world-wide vocation to civilize and to ennoble all the nations of the world."

"A martyr! . . . and now in Hell? . . . and Cain's companion?" I ventured to insinuate.

But the Professor made me no answer, for a third person had meanwhile come up, and, without any ceremony, at once usurped the conversation.

He was a strange-looking individual, apparently composed of two heterogeneous pieces. Like the mermaid in fable, he was beautiful to look at above, but hideous below. Looking at the upper part of his person he seemed clad as a knight partly accoutred, for he wore a coat of mail of the finest texture over a richly embroidered buff jacket, and a helmet with a golden ornament resembling a crown. His nether habiliments were, however, in little keeping, for they consisted merely of a pair of boots, of the very coarsest and most common description; just like those, in fact, fishermen wear, with soft well-greased tops that can be drawn quite up over the legs.

But without feeling at all discomposed at being criticised, he sat there as a man thoroughly in command of his position, resting

his hands and his chin on the hilt of his ponderous sword. From underneath his bushy eyebrows flashed a glance which it was difficult to endure; and when he began to speak he spoke as one who could brook no contradiction.

A repulsive, malicious smile played round the corners of his bearded mouth. It made me feel quite uncomfortable.

"It is all a downright lie from first to last!" he broke out, in a harsh, cutting voice.

"What! . . . lies! . . . what very rude behaviour!" stammered out the Professor, in a great state of confusion. . . . "And who may you be, if I may venture to ask?"

"I am King Abel!" answered the stranger. "Is there anything more you would like to know?"

"No, there was not!"

The Professor was evidently nonplussed, and speedily took his departure, slinking quietly and slowly off.

"That is the only way to treat these fellows!" exclaimed the knight, bursting out into a hoarse laugh. "One can only beat them with their own weapons. Lie for lie, and boundless impudence, is the only way to make them feel."

"You are not King Abel, then?" I asked.

"No more than you are! What I am is

neither here nor there. Enough, that I am one of Cain's companions; an outlaw, as it says in the song—

"'And shall I out of my country fly,
And lie on the water cold?'"*

Here the stranger suddenly broke off, and passed his hand over his forehead, as if to drive away some evil thought, and then continued:

"But if you would like to hear King Abel's true history, I can tell it you, though I am not very fond of raking old histories up."

Here he again broke off, and turning to some one who seemed to stand behind me, called out:

"Look at me, grinner! He seems to know all about it. . . . Ahoy! who are you?"

I looked round. Several persons had now come up, among whom was a thick-set young man, with an open, intelligent, rather challenging, countenance, clad in an old surcoat, one sleeve of which dangled down, and with the Danish cockade in his cap. He it was whom the knight had addressed as "grinner."

'Herr Sea-count, or Sea-king, or whatever

* From this it appears probable that the knight was one of those notorious freebooters who, after the murder of King Erik Glipping, committed such depredations on the Danish coasts by their piratical incursions during the whole of Erik Menved's reign.

you are, for no king goes about with boots like yours on dry land," answered the young man, with a grin; "I am but an unfortunate volunteer of the so-called Rye's brigade, a native of Schleswig, and, therefore, but too well versed in King Abel's history. I come direct from the Slie and Danewerk."

"Direct from the Slie and Danewerk, eh?" resumed the knight. "Then you must know all about it. So tell away. But mind, fellow, none of your Schleswig-Holstein lies here!"

"Once on a time," began the soldier, "there was a king named Valdemar. Under him Denmark reached the highest pinnacle of her prosperity; and from his time, though many a false gleam of power and splendour has shot up, the time-honoured kingdom has waned. Valdemar was the last mighty and prosperous monarch Denmark possessed."

"Fellow! that is saying much," growled the knight.

"From time immemorial Germany had been Denmark's bitterest enemy," continued the soldier, not noticing the interruption. "It was a very one-sided affair; but up to that time the Danes had maintained their old boundary in the south, and were destined to maintain it a long while still. Under King Valdemar, the Danes gained the ascendancy, and vic-

toriously carried their ravages far across the frontier. But as the Germans, spite of all confederations, were totally unable to stand against the victors, they had recourse to cunning and treachery. And now fortune favoured them. At the battle of Bornhöved, King Valdemar's power was broken for ever, a battle that forms the unlucky turning-point in Denmark's history. Downwards, ever downwards, till the present time.

"And yet King Valdemar was no less mighty in peace than in war. Formerly he had been sirnamed 'The Conqueror,' now he was entitled 'The Law-giver.' Denmark still passed through happy days under his rule.

"Before his death he divided the succession between his sons."

"His sons!" interrupted the knight in an excited voice. "Yes! that was Denmark's misfortune. The son of the good and amiable Queen Dagmar, another Valdemar, died. His posterity would have brought blessings to Denmark; but the wicked and detested Berengaria's sons all lived. They, and their race, have been Denmark's bane!"

"What you say is perfectly true, noble sir," remarked the soldier as he continued his narrative.

"Of these sons Valdemar caused allegiance

to be sworn to Erik as king. The two others got large feoffs under the crown. Abel, the second son, got South Jutland. And then the old king passed to his fathers, convinced that he had secured the prosperity of Denmark in the surest way.

"But it was but a poor prosperity. Soon there arose strife between the brothers. Abel would not hold his duchy as a feoff of King Erik, but sought, by the aid of a German alliance, to obtain uncontrolled possession of it. The first of his feudal duties was to guard the boundary against the attacks of the arrogant and powerful Germans; but, instead of doing so, he brought them in across the borders, and thus laid the foundation of the 'Germanization' of South Jutland. And, what was still worse, he gave free admission to a German spirit, German morals, and mode of thinking, not only in South Jutland, but, when he ultimately came to the throne, over the whole kingdom of Denmark. At a later period this was destined to turn the scales. A German element in the country, though with empty hands, was to prove a far more dangerous enemy than Germans outside with needle guns and rifled cannon. Who has not heard of the fantastical state Schleswig-Holstein? Duke Abel laid the sure, though in-

visible, foundation of it. Of one heart with the Holsteiners, the Schleswig duke saw in the king of Denmark only his born foe.

"It happened one fine summer in August that Abel invited his brother Erik to the town of Schleswig. Unsuspecting, and with true brotherly love, the good Erik accepted the invitation, spite of having been warned in a vision not to do so. Abel's heart was full of venomous poison, and, before long, it showed itself, for he placed his guest, his brother and his king, in chains, and gave him over into the hands of the executioner. Yes, of the executioner!

"What more need I say? The good King Erik was shamefully murdered, butchered like a lamb, and his body thrown into the river Slie.

"Denmark's throne now became vacant, and after Duke Abel, with four-and-twenty of his knights, had taken an oath that he was innocent of his brother's death, the stupid Danes chose him to be their king.

"But King Erik had said with his dying breath, 'If Abel does not repent, he will die a more shameful death than mine!'

"And so it came to pass.

"Two years later, the powerful king of Denmark was forced ignominiously to flee before the brave peasantry of Friesland, and died by a

doughty blow from a Frieslander's axe. His corpse lay long uninterred, and his carrion became a prey to the wild beasts and birds. At last he was buried in Schleswig cathedral. But King Erik's wicked brother had no peace in his grave, his spirit left it, and became the terror of the whole town. Then the monks had his corpse disinterred, and carried outside the town. In the middle of a thick forest they dug a deep hole, and, casting it in, drove a sharp stake through it to keep it fast down in the lower world, where ——"

Here the speaker suddenly stopped. On looking up, I again saw Cain and his companion.

All eyes were fastened on the wretched pair. Without moving, and in breathless silence, we let them pass by. It seemed as if they were terrified. For Cain, ever and anon, kept wildly looking behind him, while Abel walked with his drawn sword in his hand. Just as they passed us, he suddenly halted, and turned his terrified face directly towards us.

"Cain and Abel!" I stammered forth involuntarily.

"Ha!" exclaimed the knight, starting up, and the hero stood trembling in every limb. "But it is like . . . yes . . . is it not Erik?"

"What do you think, noble sirs?" asked

the soldier, in amazement, "as you know, it was Erik who was murdered, and ——"

"Yes, yes; Erik—Erik Glipping!" muttered the knight, and again forced himself to silence. "It was—it was only a foolish fancy!"

"Truly, only a fancy," interposed a heavy-looking person by way of confirmation, who was apparently a German lancer. "It is neither Erik nor Abel. On my honour, it is none other than John of Swabia!"

"Cain's companion, of whom we were speaking, has never styled himself by the one name or the other," remarked an old man with an air of great importance. "It is notorious."

"Then are there anonymous personages in Hell?" I inquired.

"Why not?" was the answer. "Anonymity is a sacred thing, and must be respected here as well as in the world."

"Enough, enough," interposed the knight, with an impatient sneer, as he left off biting the button of his sword belt; "let us hear the end of Abel's history before our company gets too mixed."

Thereupon the soldier continued:—

"Though buried with a stout oaken pole through his body, and with powerful incantations, King Abel found no rest in his grave. He was forced to walk. From century to

century down to our day, ghosts have been on the increase, becoming more wicked and more terrible than ever had been known.

"There are few people between the Slie and the Eider but have a story to tell about it. If they have not experienced aught themselves, their fathers before them have. It is especially on the banks of the Slie, out on the wild heath, and on the old frontier fortress of Danewerk, that the spectre may be seen. But it haunts inhabited places too, and even villages and hamlets. What the wild hunt is in Germany, just so is King Abel's wild course in South Jutland."

"Quite right!" remarked a sinister-looking monk, who appeared like a run-away galley-slave. "At certain periods he returns to the earth in the service of the Evil One. But he cannot do so as long as the stake is in his body; so he looks about him to try and wheedle some one to draw it out for him. But he who does so receives but a poor reward for his service.—*Retro, appage, Satanas!*—Some time ago he got hold of me, but I took good care not to do his behest on such terms. Yet from what I heard he managed to get out after all. Who the ass was this time I do not know."

"Not long since," continued the soldier, "I

was standing by the Danewerk, with my country's old foes before me. It was the last time there was to be a struggle for the time-honoured boundary of the land, or rather at last it was to be given up without striking a blow. It was a fearful time. Not King Abel alone, but all the spirits of evil, seemed to be let loose. Indeed, by far the greater proportion of all the political misfortunes that have overtaken Denmark since King Abel's time have proceeded from the Germanized portion of Southern Jutland.

"Fratricide seems to have left a lasting curse. Abel's spirit haunts the population with the boldest machinations falsehood and treachery can devise with a fratricidal spirit. Recently Abel seems to have triumphed again by the power of Germanization and deviltry. Denmark lies low, as once did the pious King Erik, who, bleeding, dying, raised his hand aloft, as if taking Heaven to witness. But the end is not yet! King Abel, remember the wheelwright's axe!

"How King Abel infests the southern portion of South Jutland for shorter or longer periods, the simple folk have many a story to tell. Fishermen who ply their business on the Slie are often terrified at hearing strange sounds proceeding from the shore. It is

as if some unearthly, supernatural being secretly followed the boats along the banks. A howl, or a rattling sound, and all kinds of fearful cries and wailings, mark its course. Sometimes the spectre shows itself, generally in the form of a dark shadow of monstrous shape and length, rising up from above the water, in pursuit of a clear blue light that glides gently along over the rippling surface, without ever being able to grasp it. Of course the fishermen never follow this light, and take care not to come within the dark shadow.

"At Mysunde, the narrowest part of the river, a huge stone lies out in the water, the top of which protrudes above the surface. It is the place where King Erik's corpse was flung into the stream. Often and often people have seen a dark shapeless form sitting on this stone, crouched up in a heap, and noiselessly stirring the water with a pointed stake. No one has ever ventured to disturb that silent fisherman!

"Sometimes, too, the traveller who is crossing the heath at night time witnesses no less strange sights. As he is wending his way beneath one of those lofty barrows, those memorials of olden time which are especially peculiar to the heaths of South Jutland, a

stone rolls down and makes him start back. He looks up, and sees on the height above a dark form seated there, with its hand under its chin. So dark is it that it would be invisible were it not that it stands out in prominent relief against the clear sky. No movement betrays it to be a living being, but it has a pair of eyes that glow like burning coals. Woe to the luckless traveller if he stays on his course, or if terror makes him pause for a single moment! Never again will he cross the heath. But King Abel remains seated on the mound till cock-crow, devising evil and venomous schemes, which, though he himself be dead, yet by the aid of the Evil One, he knows how to quicken into life and to diffuse into the hearts of the thousands who are slumbering around him.

"But Abel is an uneasy spirit. Still oftener may he be seen galloping across the heath on a snorting steed; he himself in black, the horse a shining white one, and a couple of black hounds following him. White coloured flames seem to stream from his horse's nostrils, and to flash up from under its hoofs. It is said that the spectre's track across the heath can be plainly seen long after he has gone. Each place where his horse has placed its foot, the heather is parched and scorched up. And

when on his road he comes to a lonely house, he frequently stops, not to give his steed breathing time, but to breathe out the overflowing wickedness of his evil heart. If he find ever so small a crevice in its walls, it is enough. He breathes through it with a force that makes windows and doors start open. Next morning everything is as usual. But the house is no longer the same. King Abel's thoughts have stayed behind in it. Even people of pure Danish blood and speaking the Danish tongue, by virtue of Abel's spirit feel with a German heart, and forget father, mother, tradition, fatherland, and honour—all that is wont to be so dear to man's heart.

"Forward, forward! over stock and stone on fresh errands. In one night he may visit a hundred places. In different tracts he has certain paths; and there is more than one house to be found where its inmates never dare close a door, for the spectre must have unimpeded course through. If by chance they should be closed, they are violently burst open; and glad enough are the inmates if no other disaster come.

"It is not, however, only over the waste and lonely places that King Abel travels at night time. There is scarce a town which he has not passed through on his wild course.

"When he approaches all the dogs begin to howl in dismal, ominous tones; the cattle bellow and break loose in the stalls. Then the farmer knows what is astir, crosses himself from under his counterpane, and nestles further down into the bed. Next morning some calamity is sure to have happened."

The speaker ceased; and for a few moments we observed a deep silence, not arising, however, from any uncomfortable feeling similar to that you may have experienced after having listened to a ghost-story in the twilight hours. We know nothing of such feelings here. It is readily explained, for we are all of us ghosts. At all events, the torments of Hell in which we are, is ten thousand times worse than all the ghosts in the universe.

No! that which made us silent, and which made so deep an impression, was the recollection, the lively recollection, of the world, of life.

It was the soldier who again broke the silence.

"A miserable end befel the three sons of the great King Valdemar. Erik was shamefully murdered, according to the unanimous testimony of history and of tradition, by his brother's orders. Abel met a disgraceful and miserable death under a peasant's avenging

axe. Christopher, according to the story, was poisoned in an inn. And all this in the course of nine years."

"Why do you not include Christopher's son and successor?" said a new voice; "was not Erik Glipping, too, barbarously murdered?"

I looked up; I did not know the stranger: but on looking after the knight, he had disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

Would you believe it? However deeply engrossed I was on my excursion with what I saw and experienced, I was far more engrossed with myself. Naturally enough! There can be no talk of real diversion in Hell; even in the wildest hubbub the soul can never succeed in losing itself. And, would you think it? Not only do my evil deeds recur to my thoughts to torture and to harass me, but my good deeds also. I repeat, it is but natural. For our best deeds even are not free from blemish. There is a sharp hook to them all, and it is with this that they recur to the memory here in Hell. It is like a talon thrust into the heart.

Listen to me, while for a little while I am constrained to speak of myself again.

There was a young man in my office I was very fond of. Among other business matters, he was entrusted with several small sums of money. Presently I began to smell a rat;

and several little but corroborative circumstances seemed only to confirm my reasons for suspecting him. I watched him narrowly, and before long discovered that he had taken to gambling. By a strange coincidence an opportunity presented itself of catching him in the very act, and I determined to avail myself of it.

The gaming-house was situate in a lonely part of the suburbs; and though the adventure was not unattended with danger, I thought little of it. Certainly among my many failings I did not lack courage.

It was one snowy, wretched, wintry night, towards midnight, that I stood outside a dilapidated, apparently uninhabited house, wrapped up in a large, coarse overcoat. I gave a certain signal, and the door was immediately opened. At the end of a dark passage, along which I had to grope my way, was another door; it was locked, but some one presently opened it, and I entered the hell. Here I found a numerous company of a low, varied kind, who seemed quite at home in an atmosphere oppressive from heat, and redolent with the fumes of tobacco. They were playing different games. At one of the tables my clerk presided; he was keeping the bank. At that instant an idea flashed across me. It was

hazardous, but I felt sure it would succeed; so I approached the table, and deposited my stakes.

His eye fell on mine directly; and the effect my apparition had on him was terrible. He turned deadly pale, tottered to a chair, and let the cards fall out of his hands. When he had somewhat recovered himself, he rose up and seemed hesitating whether he should fly or strike me to the ground. But a stern look and a sign on my part were enough to restrain him. One of the bystanders noticing his indisposition offered him a brimming goblet of wine, which he clutched eagerly and drained to the very dregs; and now he became as crimson as he had been pale before. Once more he ventured to raise his eyes to mine, but a cold, icy glance made him speedily drop them. I stood to all appearances before him as a perfect stranger, simply demanding that the game should proceed. The others desired the same. No one, of course, had the slightest suspicion of the real state of the case.

There was, then, no mercy for the sinner; he had to endure it a while longer yet. With trembling hands he dealt out the cards, received and paid the stakes. The game went merrily on, and odd enough the *banquier*

seemed now to have all the luck. But I waited; I did not doubt but that a turn would come soon. At first I had only been one of many players; now I was almost the only one. At the proper time I began to force my game. Never had such sums of money been staked there before; therefore the excitement was enormous. But the *banquier* was the most excited of all, he seemed as if he were on the rack. An end, however, must come! One turn more, and the bank was broken!

Thereupon the wretched man sprang up, as if beside himself, and endeavoured to rush past me, crying out, "All is lost; all is lost!"

But I seized him by the arm. "Not all," I said, in a low tone; "there is more to be lost yet! . . . Stay! We will go together!"

And I made him take his coat, hat and stick, and leave the company with me in quite a decorous manner. Of course a great excitement prevailed; but it was managed so quickly and adroitly, that no one thought of interposing.

So I took him with me. With tottering knees he crawled along by my side, while a strict silence was observed by both of us.

But as soon as I had got him into my room, I opened upon him. "I had had such a high opinion of him, he had been so trusted, and

had deceived me so shamefully. . . . He must smart for it!"

He appeared very contrite, humbled, in fact, crushed to the earth. Never had I seen a more miserable-looking object. At length he left off begging for mercy for himself; but besought me in the most piteous terms for his poor mother. He was her only support, and the sole joy that she had left in the world.

I let him beg and pray a long while. I had fully made up my mind that he should not escape too cheaply. He should not forget this night as long as he lived.

At length I began to relent.

"I would give him a chance of showing me that he was really sorry, and of becoming a new and better man."

So everything was satisfactorily arranged. No! not quite satisfactorily either. For as he was leaving, I noticed that he staggered, as if he had been intoxicated, and could scarcely keep on his feet. I could not let him go home in this plight, for his mother would have at once suspected something. I rang for the servant, and had a bed made up for the poor fellow in my house.

Next morning he was in a raging fever, and became delirious. The thought of his mother now flashed across my mind; he had

been thinking much more of her than of himself. Of course it was out of the question to think of removing him. So I hastily made up my mind. Ringing for my old, confidential servant, I gave him strict orders to make the young man's stay in my house a profound secret, and then wrote to his mother to tell her that "I had been obliged to send him off suddenly on some important business that admitted of no delay. He would probably be absent," I said, "for some weeks, and I would take an early opportunity of calling upon her."

Thus, under the Almighty, his fate rested in my hands. For weeks he lay in a violent fever. Nearly all my time was divided between him and his mother. In reality I was all that a brother could be to the one, and a son to the other. And when at last the sick man began to be convalescent, I nursed him with the tenderest care; while at the same time it was no little tax on my powers of invention to tranquillize his mother.

At last he recovered his health. And then it was given out that he had just returned from his journey, and had been taken ill on the road.

Yes, indeed he had been on a journey to the kingdom of death, and it was from this journey he had returned. But the secret was

well kept, and never came to his mother's ears. I put him into another post in the office, and never had occasion to find any fault with him again.

But now to the main point!

Possibly you may say that I had every reason to be satisfied with myself. I also thought so once. But here . . . here the scales have fallen off from before my eyes; everything is exposed to me in all its nakedness and clearness.

In itself it was no bad idea thus to seize the bird by the wing, and to keep it a prisoner till it was completely tamed. But I am bound to confess that the spirit that prompted me was a presumptuous conceit. My self-complacency did not feel appeased by the moral power I held over the delinquent. With one look I had compelled him to take up his cards and resume the game; and then I had given him a lesson which was a safe guarantee that he would never take a card in his hands again.

And then as to my kindness towards him, after I had once admitted him to mercy. Surely it was a praiseworthy deed!

But if I must speak the truth, it had its principal source in the feeling that I had been too severe with him, and harder than was necessary. I had found a kind of cruel pleasure in seeing him writhe under the lash of my in-

dignation. And thus, my friend, what becomes of the good action? It is its deficiencies only that now goes to my heart and tortures me.

Now it is I that writhe under the thought of what his sufferings must have been. Contradictory as it may appear, it is still true. I suffer from the tortures of a sincere compassionateness.

All his life through he bore traces of my excessive severity towards him. All the buoyancy and high spirits of youth had vanished all at once, and he never became the man his youth gave promise he would be. It seemed as if something were rent asunder within him. A shy, nervous look, ever retrospective, bore ample testimony to the secret history of his life.

Oh! these good deeds, how many have they brought into misery? For, rest assured, if most of the good actions done were to be submitted to a scrutinizing investigation they would yield a pitiful result. Not that I mean to assert that there are no such things as good actions. But when everything is taken into consideration what are the best of them but simple duty?

However one may twist and turn them, no balance will ever be got out of them through all eternity.

Do you know what self-torture is? Doubt-

less! Else your experience of the world has not been great. You know then that there is no greater torture than self-torture. But only first in Hell does it become quite clear. It constitutes the very essence of the torture of Hell, that we ourselves are the instruments of our own torture.

One of the mildest forms of this self-torture is musing; and yet how wearing it is! Yes, wearing is the proper expression for it. We wear ourselves so utterly away that there does not remain a healthy thought behind. Then, naturally, we are obliged to pause. We stand on the threshold of insanity, but over it we cannot step. How the brain swims! How the heart burns! We are just in that state in which people in the world commit suicide. But in Hell we can never carry it further than to wear ourselves away.

Was there not once something called "The Three Articles of Faith?" I have a strangely misty and yet firm idea about it. Had it not something to do with the Trinity? And was it not one of the most precious gifts bestowed on mortal man?

I have mused over it till I have well-nigh lost my senses. But now I have grown a little wiser. Of what benefit had it been to me had I been able to recall them? To the

faith, to which their name and substance are due, I should never have attained. Faith would ever have remained to me but an empty idea. Yes, I have the idea; but how hollow, how terribly hollow! There is a bottomless, yawning abyss in it.

What is to believe? God's Son is the object of faith. I know it, and the devils know it. He is the Saviour! But how He has become a Saviour, or how a soul has any part or share in Him, alas! alas! I have no conception.

And it is just the same with repentance. If I could only feel a moment's real repentance, that same moment I should be saved. But, and it is a natural consequence, I torture myself in vain.

Ah! I can . . . and yet I cannot. Sometimes I seem so near it, my tears seem on the point of bursting out. But it is all an imposition; it is in vain.

"Only one single tear," I sigh, in insufferable agony. Oh, eternal mercy! Ah! what use to invoke without faith? . . . Only a single tear!

Time runs on. Nonsense, of course, for there is no time here! However, there must be something that runs on; the ever-waxing light shows it. The important, the terribly brilliant moment is approaching when Para-

dise shall swallow up the darkness of Hell in its splendour. Yet, you must not attach any weight to what I am saying. I am talking of what I am quite ignorant. Perhaps this moment may be terrible without being magnificent; perhaps it may still be far off.

Time, however, runs its course in the world; we perceive that plainly. Recently a pompous announcement of a *Te Deum* having been held in one of the world's capitals reached us. It must have sounded through the lowest corner of Hell—the Devil's corner. It must have been a gala day for the damned.

The cause of this *Te Deum* was the prosperous result of a war which a powerful state had been waging against one of its smaller and weaker neighbours. A regular predatory incursion; but it was successful.

The world offered its congratulations; but this was not enough for the conqueror. He must solemnly congratulate himself, and chant a *Te Deum!*

These *Te Deum* festivals are the most scandalous things in the world. It is more than hypocrisy, it is boundless impudence. In order to appear respectable in the eyes of the world, a nation does not hesitate to employ an official blasphemy whereby it may gild over its baseness. So far do people go in their

shameful endeavours to convert dirt into gold, that God even must be dragged down from Heaven into the mire. One day they will bitterly repent it!

One of the illusions wherein the world so readily rocks itself to slumber, and about which there is so much loose talk, is the high degree of moral dignity it conceives it has attained. It is the most wretched, most ridiculous self-conceit. The world is just as evil in disposition, just as brutal and as cowardly as ever; only a little more polished perhaps. In the great world there is just as little of anything that is absolutely valid, or of a fixed nature, as of old. Honour, morality, truthfulness, righteousness, compassionateness, all is mere outside show, directly any higher aim, that is to say, when interest, makes its demand.

The right of the strong has a wide extent still!

Small states, such as Holland, Belgium, Denmark, &c., are a prey to the first great power that only has the audacity to make the venture. Yes, to make the venture; everything depends on that. And if the enterprise succeed, the deed of violence is at once justified.

Such in fact is the real state of the world, of the so-called public morality. If in civil

and in social life men observed the same rule with each other as obtains between states, the world would be one vast robber's den, unfit for any human being to live in.

Yes, truly, one must allow that broad is the road that leads to destruction. But it is from Hell that one first gets to learn its breadth.

Some dance, as it were, along this road. But it takes up some little time, for they have to run into so many inns, taverns, and casinos on the road. The whole of their life is a pastime, a sport, a feast; and they do not inquire whether it is God or the Devil that gives the feast. They employ all their senses, and if occasion offers procure themselves one or two extra senses. It is against nature, it is true; but what of that? The enjoyment is all the greater. They drag as many things as possible with them into the whirl wherein they revolve; whether genuine or spurious is a matter of supreme indifference. They breathe only in the present moment; their future is the next ball, rout, or banquet, the last piece at the theatre, or the latest fashion; their eternity, the wearisome hour of expectation. They say to themselves, "We live, we live." But death holds them in his grasp. Holbein's well-known Dance of Death in the old town of

Basle is more than a fable. They dance, saunter, prate, sleep, and eat themselves through the world. Suddenly a little wrench, and . . . they are in Hell!

And many others creep as it were along the broad road. One would think it was troublesome work, but it is not. The mole in the earth does not find it more troublesome than the bird in the air. And they are a kind of mole.

"We look to what is solid," say they; and then they burrow down into the earth.

"We see," say they, and they are right.

It is a mere fable that moles are blind from their birth. On the contrary they have the keenest eyesight; even for every little morsel they meet with on the road. They are not, indeed, searching for morsels; on the contrary, they are looking out for whole pieces. But nothing is beneath their notice, so they put up with the morsels of the earth's treasures; for they know none other. Ever looking downwards, only that which is found in the soil is of value to them. Of what is above they are ignorant, neither do they trouble themselves to know. It has never excited their attention that there is a Heaven, and that it is full of stars. Their life is one endless burrowing; nay, not endless! For when they have thus burrowed through greater or smaller portions of the

world, all at once they come upon a hole quite unawares. This hole is death. Down they plump into it, and when they awaken to consciousness they find themselves in Hell.

Amongst the many wonderful things in the world, this is doubtless one of the most wonderful, that although all men know that they must die—nothing more certain than that—yet there are so few who think of death, and fewer still who make any preparations for it.

Most persons die, as it were, quite unawares. So most of them awaken in Hell! How can it be otherwise?

Yes, most of them! But even here there is a wonderful circumstance connected with it. In Hell one meets all kinds of persons one had never expected to meet. Respected, honoured, and, what is more, lamented, they passed out of the world; the tearful eyes of those they left behind were upraised to Heaven. But the dear departed ones were not there; they were in Hell! It can readily be explained. God judges differently to men. However good and excellent these persons may have been, they lacked the most needful thing of all; that on which everything else depends—a believing heart, filled with God.

Perhaps these persons may have gained the whole world, but they have lost their own souls.

And now for the other side!

It is often the case that persons never come here, though they may have been long expected. Their deeds, their fame, has gone before them; has long since, as it were, announced their arrival. We expect them, but in vain; they do not come. Only one explanation is possible. Great sinners as they may have been, miserable evil-doers of a deep dye, still they may have found mercy before God in a fruitful repentance. Perhaps at the last moment the Saviour interposed between them and Hell, where they were so surely expected, and where their place was as good as already allotted.

Oh! you who have loved, who bitterly mourn over your departed ones, you will naturally ask with throbbing heart and streaming eyes,

"Ah! cannot then our earnest prayers be of any profit to you?"

I do not know. But pray for us; pray still for us with all your heart, and without ceasing. This I know; true love can never be lost, can never be without fruit.

For God's being is Love, and His Son is the fulness of love towards men. Maybe, maybe

your prayers will even yet benefit us; not now only, but through all eternity.

Whether I look forward or backward my suffering is equally great, though different in nature. If I look forward, all my suffering concentrates in one terrible thought—an endless, hopeless existence. If I look back, in the ever smarting remorse of an ill-spent life.

Yes, from this place is it only first evident what fruits, what blessed fruits one's earthly life could have borne. Oh! how happy are you who still live, and who still have the power of choosing your fate.

"As long as there is life there is hope!"

Truer words were never spoken. Oh! then, never give way to that false, that destroying idea, that it is too late. This lie alone has destroyed more souls than all the vices of the world together. It is not too late! Even if death awaited you on the morrow it is not too late. Your earthly life, however exhausted it may be, can still bear fruit in peace, in joy; and the glory of life eternal can still dawn upon you.

Change then your hearts; turn, and seek peace where only it may be found.

Oh! if you only had a clear apprehension of the reality as it is, you would never despair. However oppressed, miserable, or doomed, you

may feel yourself to be, you have no reason to despair. It is not on your side that despair finds a home; ah, no! it is here! Here it really is too late!

If you only had a clear apprehension of the very small proportion your earthly life bears to the sum total of your existence, and how very little of that is yet lost, even though all your worldly expectations may have been shipwrecked. All do I say? But no mortal has ever come so far as that. However void the world may appear to him, there is still many a green spot to be found in it; a man's happiness can take root on more than one place in the world, if only hope does not fail.

And the world is not all; it is but a small portion of your allotted existence. Look up to the stars in the sky. There are more than you can number. And if the world really were lost to you, what of that? It is but one star fallen from your Heaven. You have still all the others left. Therefore do not despair. It is a lie from Hell, if any one tells you it is too late. You can still find happiness as surely as there is a God. Only return and seek Him, who can save, and who can preserve you. It is still vouchsafed you, late though it may be, to begin a new life. But delay not to enter upon that blessed road

which leads from star to star into the kingdom of glory. Oh, only do not delay!

For at the same moment death overtakes you on the old path, Heaven with all its stars will collapse, and you will find yourself in eternal darkness.

It is not too late. For however much be lost, the most important thing of all to be saved is still left; even life itself, your immortal soul, your peace, your bliss.

Have you lost your mammon? Your soul is of ten thousand times greater value.

Are you without a future? Behold eternity lies before you.

Has your love been betrayed? Love still will save you.

Are you living a life of abasement? There is an eternal, a perfect reparation.

Has the world abandoned you? Heaven is still left to you.

Can you no longer see any joy before you? Still you may come to be an inheritor of everlasting salvation.

Do you now understand how very little is really yet lost—lost perhaps in itself—but yet so little compared with what is still to be won or lost? Then take courage. It is certainly true; however far you may have gone it is not yet too late! It is not yet too late to

begin a new, a holy, a blessed and a happy life.

I have seen her. It was as if death shuddered through me again. Shaken to the core of my heart, I rushed away from the sight, and fainted under a load of overwhelming accusation. Yes it was her! her, against whom my sin is so great, that I have never once sought to vindicate myself. Do you feel how much this implies?

Oh! my friend! I have never spoken of it, but long have secretly dreaded lest Anna, whose life I so thoughtlessly, so wantonly destroyed, should meet me in Hell.

She is here! I have seen her!

I was walking with one of my acquaintances.

"Do you know Undine?" he asked.

On my replying in the negative, he continued,

"There you may see her."

I followed the direction in which he pointed, and saw a divine, comely female form, very lightly clad, and with dishevelled hair. Her dress seemed to cling to her limbs; she seemed dripping wet. She was quietly occupied in wringing out her saturated dress and her heavy hair. At that moment she raised

her eyes; a terrible shudder ran through me. It was Anna!

Yes, it was her! The same regular, lovely features; the same graceful figure; and yet, though easy to recognise, still so changed. Ah, how changed! Truly the same features, but how disfigured, how sadly depraved! Passion, lust, despair, had each in turn left their marks on her earthly career. She seemed to be many years older; and perhaps but few years had elapsed between her fall and her death. And her death—I could not doubt it—had been the death of despair beneath the waters.

I shuddered and quivered as a criminal does when he suddenly beholds the scaffold. It was my work—this degraded, abandoned, but so fair, so beauteous a form! I was crushed. I lay as it were upon the rack beneath this overwhelming load of responsibility.

There she sat wringing out her clothes and her hair by turns, and ever and anon clasping her hands in despair. And I writhed too, under the bitter gnawing of my conscience.

Thus she sat a while, while sigh after sigh convulsed her bosom. Oh, those sighs! Her full bosom heaved and sank, as if it would burst. At first I thought to flee; a word from her mouth I felt would slay me. But I

know not what rapture seized me, for all at once I started forward as if to meet her.

Then first did she become aware of my presence. She sprang up, and regarding me with a look full of dismay and loathing fled away.

It was impossible to overtake her. By the power of her will alone she was able to keep ever at the same distance from me. At last she disappeared among a crowd of new comers, who were just making their sorrowful entrance into Hell.

Then I turned back, as if I were being lashed by the Furies!

CHAPTER XV.

I AM just come from the post office! I had only just discovered that there was a post office in Hell. No, there is nothing wanting here, save everything that a being needs to live and to hope for.

I went, then, to the post office to see if there were any letters for me. I felt impelled to go.

There is something very peculiar about this post office. Who has not heard speak of the Uriah and Judas' letters? Some maintain that their discovery arose in the east with king David, in the west with king Fenge. But it is of much older date; for doubtless it dates back to the Devil himself. Nowadays, the art is widely extended over the whole world; yes, many practise it in accordance with a purely natural impulse without ever having heard speak of it.

Well then, all these Uriah and Judas' letters go straight to Hell, and the parties concerned pay the postage at the cost of their salvation.

They are left lying in the *poste restante*, until the party comes, not the one to whom they are addressed, but the one who has written them. It is hard to have to take these letters; they literally burn one's fingers. But that is nothing compared to how they burn the heart. For the letters will be digested; the miserable writers are compelled to eat their own poisonous dirt.

But there were no letters for me; so I have not been a Judas. For the moment I really felt quite light-hearted. But naturally this was a mere illusion.

Those Judas' letters lead me to another consideration connected with them.

There is not a more serious thing in the world than to subscribe one's name, and yet there are few things which the children of the world do more thoughtlessly than this. But woe to these thoughtless ones! Every false subscription, every name which the writer repudiates, goes straight to Hell, and pulls with irresistible power—yes, irresistible; for God alone can break asunder the connection—till the writer follows after it, and finds himself in the torments of Hell.

I have seen a king sitting with a document before him; he has sat thus for centuries. To

this document he had once, in an unhappy moment, subscribed his name; what name he does not now know, for he remembers it no longer; it is quite illegible on the parchment. A blood spot has blotted it out. He ponders and ponders in the anguish and pain of his heart; the death-sweat stands out on his forehead: but the name is and remains wanting; it is not visible. It is his incessant torment in Hell! Oh! if he had only not put his name to that parchment!

I have seen—but it would take me to too great a length if I were to speak of all I have seen of this nature. It is especially the so-called high politics that fills Hell with so many false names, and miserable objects connected therewith. It bears the epithet high, because it is ever the world's custom to attach high-sounding titles to the most despicable things. It is styled an exalted policy just because it is something of the most contemptible that is to be found in the world.

The other day one of these treaties arrived here. There was a great blotch in it. Of course we knew what it meant. The state of the case stood as follows:

There was a little state, so little that it could only exist on the most gracious sufferance, that is to say, it occupied a vacant space among

other states. They had been so benevolent as to say that it was necessary to the balance of Europe; in other words, that each of its powerful neighbours had a great wish for it; but as the one could not envy the other its possession, it remained undisturbed. It was a kind of European taboo. In order to make it known to all the world, and to place it once for all on a firm basis, six of the neighbouring great powers drew up a treaty between them in the name of the Holy Trinity, and affixed their names to it, whereby the existence of this little state was assured, of course, to the end of time.

Twelve years passed away, when a totally unexpected and excellent opportunity presented itself to two of its powerful neighbours to mix themselves up in the concerns of this little country, and to feather their nests cheaply. Of course, the treaty was rather awkwardly in the way; but by an arbitrary pretext it was nullified. They simply disowned it. It may have appeared to be a hazardous thing to do, but in reality it was not so: brute force is always sure to overawe, especially when it conducts itself with unbounded impudence, and tramples all respect under foot.

The other great powers growled a little it is true, and thought it was very shameful

behaviour; indeed, one of them went so far as to give vent to big words. But there it ended. One after the other gave it to be understood that it did not feel itself bound to insist on the observance of the treaty any more than the others, and thus gradually they quietly slunk away; and when it came to the point, they all in a mass drew in their horns, and let the treaty go to the winds.

Thus, then, was the little state handed over to the tender mercies of the stronger. The world cried "Ah!" over the disgraceful conduct; but no one moved so much as a little finger in the cause of righteousness and of compassion; not even a word was spoken! An earnest word, spoken at the proper time, would have been sufficient to avert the wrong. But Europe, under the circumstances, knew no better policy than to remain silent, and perfectly passive. So the strong fell upon the little one; three against one; sounded its ass's trumpet over its easily won victories, and knew not on which leg to stand, so elated were they with the pride of conquest. And then, when they had the little one between their knees, they slaughtered it at their leisure; laying the fattest and best pieces on one side, in order to agree about the distribution afterwards, as best they might.

This is an instance of an exalted policy, and of the state of public morality in the Nineteenth Century! But the tale is not finished yet.

Torn asunder and bleeding, too little and too weak hereafter to subsist alone, the unhappy victim looked around for a refuge, for a place of resort. Towards the north there dwelt kindred peoples. Naturally its first thoughts were directed to them. But thereon, one of the other powers, that had been a party to the treaty, thundered out,

"You must not venture on such a step; we will not allow it!"

In its despair, it next turned to the south. Betrayed and deserted by all who had called themselves its friends—mark well, that it was in its despair—it asked itself the question, whether it were not better to give itself up entirely into the enemy's hands, than to allow itself to be dismembered. One knows at least what an enemy is. But before the thought could well be realized, a voice just as mighty as the former, thundered from another side,

"You must not venture upon it; we will not permit it."

Truly, it was a hard case! Abandoned by its friends, crushed and torn asunder by its enemies, it dared not with its bleeding residue seek for refuge where best it might. It seemed

just as if it might not exist, neither one way nor the other. It was like cutting off a man's arms and legs, and then forbidding him to seek the doctor with the bleeding stumps, or to look about him for a corner where to lie down and die.

This is one example out of many of an exalted policy! But there is more still.

The treaty, of course, went direct to Hell, with all its subscriptions, not in the name of the triune God, but of the Devil. And as Abel's blood cried aloud from earth to Heaven, so do these subscriptions cry aloud from Hell to earth. Each name will claim its own. And these subscriptions pull with a secret, but powerful, aye, an irresistible force. They are like a waterspout at sea; they will be satiated. You, then, who have placed your names in pawn in Hell, tremble for yourselves! Come to your senses! It is but a short road between earth and Hell. Unless you meet the merciful God upon it you will surely come here.

There have only been two persons in the world who were able to teach me patience; my mother and Lili. But Lili's power over me, though her nature was so retiring and gentle, was, beyond compare, the stronger of the two. On my mother's side it was a cold

sense of duty that influenced me; but on Lili's it was an indescribable heart-warming goodness and tenderness. Conscious of my great physical strength I was passionate and imperious. I had a decided inclination to break through all opposition, and to overcome all impediments. Even at what was literally impossible I chafed and involuntarily clenched my hand. During our journey abroad this unruly temper made itself apparent; but it was, moreover, on this very journey that Lili gradually gained such complete control over me. I went to school with her without knowing it; strange enough, I must add, she knew it just as little herself—and among the good, precious things I learnt, or began to learn, was patience.

How vividly it all appears before me!

We had come to Lucerne, and were to cross into Italy over St. Gothard. I had determined that Lili should thoroughly enjoy this passage across the Alps. In my opinion there is nothing more lovely in the world than this sudden transition from the severe north to the mild Hesperian south. By crossing the St. Gothard, Splügen, or Simplon, the fulness of Italy's loveliness is gathered into one journey from morning till night.

A foolish reminiscence! Why can I not help renewing it with the aid of all my senses?

The greater the enjoyment then, the greater the torment now.

We were, then, in Lucerne! The weather was as unfavourable as it could be, and we had to linger there a whole week. It was a severe trial to me. Every morning Lili and I used to go out on the long bridge, called the Hofbrücke, over the river Reuss, to look at the state of the weather. We could scarcely see fifty paces before us across the lake. Everything was enveloped in mist and fog; not a single mountain top peeped out, except for an instant, and then vanished. There seemed no signs of any improvement in the weather.

Never shall I forget those morning walks, so vexing, and yet so pleasant. We used to walk and linger there for the chance of its clearing up. Lili would lead me up and down the fourteen hundred feet long bridge like a wild animal in chains. In her presence I did not like to break out. But I could not help biting my lips, and now and then stamping my feet on the wooden planks of the bridge. I used to do it involuntarily. Yet this girl of sixteen coerced the wild nature within me so easily. But one gentle pressure of her soft arm, and I curbed every expression of impatience. The fact was I could have

thrown myself down on the wet, dirty planks and worshipped her.

How inventive, how full of spirit she was in diverting and amusing me, while we paced backwards and forwards on that strange old bridge. It was roofed over, and between the rafters was a long row of quaint old paintings of the most genial composition and execution. She would stop before one, now before another, and by her conversation would put such animation into the pictures, that I could not help being engrossed and even smiling. Often, indeed, I was obliged to burst out into a loud laugh.

When we had thus waited, and waited in vain, and she had succeeded in putting me in a good humour again, we would return to the hotel, where my mother was waiting breakfast for us.

At last early one morning it did clear up. It was a regular holiday. We had come out earlier than usual, and were standing on the bridge, when the curtain of clouds began to lift. The lake gradually unfolded itself to our view, and its lovely shores became quickly visible. Presently a mountain peak peeped out. We could not tear ourselves away from it; we stood as if we had been enchanted to the spot, until the whole transformation had taken place.

At length the brilliant panorama revealed itself in all its magnificence. The shores of the lake lay in one extended bow before us; while above, mountain upon mountain reared its head aloft, and in the background, and highest of all, the Central Alps with their eternal snow, arranged like a frame formed of the Righi, Pilate, Dödi, Uri-Rothstock, &c., &c.; but who can remember all their names? One mountain after the other emerged into view in the dazzling brightness of its majesty.

I nearly embraced Lili in my ecstasy, but lost nothing by not doing so. For she was as much overwhelmed as I was. Involuntarily she laid her arm on my shoulder. I thought I could hear her heart beating, but perhaps it was my own.

So the next day we were early astir, and after crossing the lake made the ascent of St. Gothard with joyous hearts. The sailors were of opinion that the weather was not to be relied on; but we trusted to our usual good luck, and gave ourselves up to the enjoyment of the day. We walked and drove by turns. Lili could not rest; no sooner had she taken a little repose than she was again in motion. The mountain nature continued to develop itself more majestically. The first alpine rose had well nigh cost me my life. It was for

Lili, of course. What a day! A day like that is a whole existence.

As the sun set we passed through the wild dark valley of Urserndal, and put up for the night in the little village of Andermatt.

But the next day, what a sorrowful change! A change of weather had taken place during the night; snow had fallen on the mountain tops, and a storm was still raging.

Great was my impatience at this new stoppage. The day passed, and the next, but no alteration in the weather. I made little excursions on all sides, which were not devoid of danger. But it worried Lili, and she begged me to remain at home. Of course I obeyed, and my reward was great. What no other person in the world could have done, she succeeded in doing. She made the time pass pleasantly away, and what is more, gave me, unknown to myself, a further and more complete lesson in patience. I could with reason say I became as patient as a lamb, but that I dislike the comparison.

She took me with her from one house to the other in the little village. She entered them all, as if she had known the inmates long, and the good folks, indeed, received her as an old acquaintance. Those quaint mountaineers so thoroughly appreciated her unre-

served, confiding manner. Everywhere they opened their doors to her, and told her all about their domestic affairs and mode of life. The simple economy of these mountaineers—so different to anything we had seen before—was undoubtedly very attractive; but to speak the truth, I saw little else besides Lili. And who could have turned their eyes away from her? She was like a sunbeam in those dark huts, so ineffably graceful, and yet, in a far higher degree, so benevolent. It was quite plain to me, and I am convinced that the people entertained the same opinion, that she hallowed everything she came in contact with. Oh, Lili! I see you before me. A purer, more fragrant being could not have been found in the world.

But I am wandering!

She took me with her to the small workshops and bazaars, where we found all manner of pretty things carved in wood, botanical and mineralogical collections. Boldly she knocked at every door, and everywhere she appeared welcome. It was like enchantment. A common observer might have said, "Yes, youth and beauty possess such a power!" But in reality far higher means were at Lili's disposal in this enchantment. God alone knew them fully.

Our stay turned out to be far more profitable than I could have supposed. When we left this unfruitful, though lovely, spot, which is perched up several thousand feet above the ordinary level of the earth, we took with us a charming Alpine Idyl.

At times, however, a feeling of despondency would come over me. One evening I asked Lili—

"How ever can you be so patient and so pleased in a poor, desert place like this, stopped just in the very middle of a pleasant journey to lovely, blessed regions?"

"Oh, Otto! I have no difficulty," she answered, quietly. "Certainly, it is barren and poor here, and many things are wanting; but I know that behind yonder mountain lies a Paradise awaiting for me. But a few days and hours, and I shall be there. This is a true picture of life, is it not, Otto? This world must so often appear to us a poor, desert place, full of wants. But for all that we can be comforted and happy. For we know that on the other side the mountain before us lies an Elysium that awaits us as our own Fatherland; where a place has been prepared for us in a Father's house, with a brother's heart, and where they earnestly long after us. There is only a mountain between

us and these blessed regions: it is the Mountain of the Crucifixion. The road passes over it; then we shall be at home, then we shall be happy!"

A few days later we rested ourselves in an enchanting villa, built on a promontory that jutted out far into the Lago di Maggiore. Lili was sitting by me in the pilastered hall, against whose basement the waves gently rippled, and whence we had a view of surpassing loveliness across the lake to some islands which seemed as if they were floating on its surface. The clearly defined shores on the other side, above which the mountain-tops reared their heads aloft, pile upon pile, appeared as if they were gradually melting away; while the loftiest and most distant tops and ridges appeared like glittering white clouds, that were on the point of floating away, or of dissolving themselves in the azure blue of Heaven.

We had only recently been in mid-winter, now we were enjoying the most delightful summer weather. Lili was sitting with her lap full of some roses and myrtles she had been gathering. She was buried in deep thought, as she played with the flowers; now gathering them up and letting them fall, or twining them in and out among one another, and again separating them. She literally

bathed her pretty hands in the fresh flowers. My heart burned. The flowers she was playing with so thoughtlessly were the very ones suited for a bridal wreath. It was all I could do to prevent myself from seizing her little hands, and smothering them with kisses, and yet there was no danger. There was an angel always between her and me.

"What are you thinking of, Lili?" I asked, in an excited tone.

"I was thinking of poor, dark Urserndal on the other side the mountain," she answered, composedly, and my heart began to beat violently; "and as I think of it, everything around me here seems more lovely—yes, ravishingly beautiful. When I feel the magnificence of the present moment, I bless the hours I spent yonder side the mountain. Do you not think, dear Otto, that when once we are up there with God, a like happy feeling will come over us as we think of the dark, regretful days we have spent on earth? I am sure of it. We shall bless them then, in so far as we were patient, and have preserved our hope. For bliss will then only be fully revealed to us when we recall them to mind."

What hallowed, but painful feelings quivered through me at these words of Lili's! It was not remorse alone, but a sincere repentance.

Should I ever come to look back with joy from a higher place on the life I had led on earth? Oh what a life! It must, it must be different.

Need I explain my feelings at these reminiscences, when I look back on my earthly life? But I never came over the mountain Lili spoke of, the Mountain of the Crucifixion. The mountain rather came on me, and beneath its weight I lie crushed, destroyed in Hell.

A tour in Italy, especially to a chivalrous gentleman like myself, is a sore trial of patience. Custom-house officers, porters, hotel keepers, beggars, all the pack that swarm along the highroads and fall upon the traveller like swarms of gad-flies; the cheating; and the swindling that pervades everything; all this was naturally more than I, with the best possible will, could endure. I was very much inclined to thrash my way through Italy, and I felt that I was the man to do so. But that is not a very delightful way of travelling through a beautiful country, to say nothing of breaking a lance for the fair lady of one's heart.

But Lili did not give me any liberty to do so. After having on one occasion terrified her by a violent scene which I bitterly repented afterwards, I submitted myself to her entirely,

and allowed her to control me. I became as tractable as the lion under the fairy's white hand in the fable. Thenceforth it was only necessary for her to lay a hand on my arm, to give me one look, or just speak to me by my name, to quell the most rebellious spirit in my nature.

On the other hand, how admirably she understood to treat these wretched people. Where I only gained curses wherever I came, she reaped blessings.

Her road through the world was, on the whole, wonderfully smooth for her. But she smoothed mine also. I felt that each day I lived with her I was becoming a better man. Yet, perhaps, this too was only an illusion; for an altered person I never became really!

CHAPTER XVI.

"THEIR worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."

Do you see, I remember even yet something of the religious teaching of my childhood? Terrible words! But it is in Hell only that one realizes their full meaning.

The worm—that is, of course, remorse, which ever finds nourishment in evil recollections; the fire, are the fleshly lusts, for which no longer any fuel can be found.

I have frequently alluded to the gnawing worm in these pages, but have spoken but little of the unquenchable fire. Do you ask, why? Then you must rest contented with the following explanation.

Of the lusts of the flesh it is not well to speak in Hell; they are too repulsive, too unnatural. The least that can be said is that one inwardly loathes oneself. One feels annihilated in these lusts and passions, which are so utterly powerless, so utterly bare; stripped, as it were, not to the skin, not even to the

bones, but to the very heart's core. You will, doubtless, understand me when I simply tell you,—fleshly lusts without flesh must naturally be a torture of Hell.

Yes, it is a fire; an unquenchable fire. Unquenchable just because there is no matter to feed it. If it depended at all upon matter it would not be unquenchable; for no matter is eternal.

What more can I say without approaching the subject too closely? Here in Hell we are without a body; but it is exactly as if we had one. That is the terrible part of it. This body that does not exist, demands an incessant attention on our parts, a constant stimulus of some kind or another. It will wallow in its wonted enjoyments and debaucheries. It is as craving as ever; it abates not one tittle of its claims; and the claim is made upon the poor lost soul, which it can never satisfy. But no refusal is accepted. In the world, it was the body that burned in the flames of lust. Here, it is the body no longer, it is legally excused. It is the soul that burns!

Old folks say—Yes, it is self-evident that we have very old folks in Hell. A thousand, two thousand, three thousand years, is no excessively great age, according to the reckoning of the world. There are people who have

lived under Sardanapalus, Cyrus, Alexander; there are those who have been cotemporaries of Socrates, Cicero, Horace, Seneca, &c., &c. Yes, possibly some of these persons are themselves present. But I have made it a rule not to particularize any one. There are those who could speak of the fall of Nineveh, the taking of Troy, the destruction of Jerusalem, who have studied the stars with the Chaldæans, watched their flocks with Abraham, assisted at the building of the Pyramids. Yes, there are those who are even of older date than the Deluge. So you see we can study history from its very fountain head. But, unfortunately, everything here is devoid of interest and of usefulness. So we do not make it our study. As far as regards myself there is only one thing that engrosses and occupies my thoughts. I feel an inward longing to meet with some one who has lived with God's Son, the Saviour. But it is altogether fruitless. Certainly, there are those who have much to tell, but they tell of everything except of Him. Either it is a false Messiah, a promoter of rebellions, or a malefactor. In all these voluminous tales there is not a particle of any higher truth, and it is that after which my soul longs. Is it not desperate?

But I have wandered off from what I was going to say.

Old folks say that it is a remarkable fact, that the atmosphere, especially of late, has become much denser in Hell. We have no "asphyxi-ometer," but I certainly am not overstating the mark, when I say that in the course of about a century nauseousness has increased fifty per cent. It will be a sad look-out if it continue to rise in this proportion! This feeling of nausea, which never ceases, is an indescribable torture. It is exactly as if we must vomit. Naturally it is only a feeling, for otherwise we should vomit up ourselves, and that, of course, is nonsense.

That twaddle was ever on the increase I had already observed when in the world. Clever persons, whom I spoke with about it, said it was owing to people being more and more enlightened. Truly, a very remarkable explanation! But that twaddle increased to such a degree I really had no idea.

Constantly on the increase—what a sorry prospect for the world! Certainly the world cannot exist without it, and, therefore, up to a certain indefinite degree it finds pleasure in it. Many persons' lives are sheer twaddle altogether. But it must get too much at last. It forebodes another deluge; the world seems as if it must sink under twaddle. It is only necessary to go back to the days of our grandfathers!

How simple, comparatively, their manner of life was! People then spoke out their opinions, and were understood. But from one decade to another, they have been getting more and more artificial and abstruse. Stays and statistics have pushed themselves in everywhere to give twaddle a form and a little variety.

Time is ever more and more fruitful in all manner of inventions, but more fruitful still in the most inconceivable circumlocution. Languages are ever being infinitely enriched with new words and modes of speech—the flowers of eloquence—in the interests of twaddle. Phrases and forms have become two of the ruling forces of life. The intellect shrinks up more and more, becomes stunted, cowed; for it becomes of less and less importance; it is twaddle, not genius, that has the upper hand. Truly, twaddle has offered to take genius into its service. But that would be too bad, contrary to all the laws of common sense. Therefore genius says,

"No, rather die first!"

Another observation, too, has recently been made, and not less striking. The number of women that come into the tortures of Hell is wonderfully increased, and like twaddle is ever increasing. This phenomenon has no connection with twaddle. In former days,

and it is only necessary to go back half a century, the number of men in Hell was not so little above that of the women. Now the sexes are pretty nearly equally represented; but, it is as well to remark that the women have already begun to exceed the men in numbers.

There is a reason for everything, and the reason of this phenomenon cannot be enveloped in doubt to any one who has wandered along through the world with his eyes open. It lies in the modern way of bringing them up. Education is the watchword of the age. But in what does this education for the most part consist, which they so eagerly impart to women? Is it the education of the heart or of the spirit that is implied? Are they made acquainted with nature and with history in order that eternity may dawn upon them like the sun, and refract a thousand beams through their hearts? Are they taught what is great, noble, and beautiful in life, in order that they may become conscious of humanity, and of womanhood? Are they taught before all things truthfulness and love; and to feel that they are in God, their Creator, Saviour, and Lord?

No! no such thought is ever entertained. By education is understood the making them spell or blunder through two or three

foreign languages, which they seldom learn to any profit. It is a part of their education that they may be able to strum upon some musical instrument or other, and execute some brilliant piece. Further it is a part of their education that they may be able to talk volubly about any topic, though they really know nothing at all about it, in order to show that they are more or less "emancipated," as the expression is. And further it is a part of their education that they dress and conduct themselves according to the fashion. Every fold in their dress is a matter of the last importance, while upon the folds in their hearts but little thought is bestowed.

In short, outside show, and to be able to chatter, are considered to be all *in all*; a show, by the way, which is not even able to befool anybody. They treat girls like dolls, and not like human beings: their bringing up, their education is from first to last but dollism! Poor, poor women! It is almost a worse treatment than you received even in the most barbarous times. Then people started from the supposition that you had no souls. And for a long while they might say so; but you had a soul for all that. But now they have taken your soul away from you, and that is far, far worse. In truth it is little wonder that women thus rendered vain.

from very childhood, should come crowding into Hell in ever-increasing numbers.

In our forefathers' days it was very different. Women then were plainly brought up to fulfil their home duties; the rest of their education was principally confined to teaching them their Catechism. Even that was something, and not so very little either. Women then had a conscience, and a destined part to fulfil. With pious and single hearts they felt themselves to be in God, and found their greatest joy in performing the duties of their sphere of life, circumscribed though it might be. But now, what is duty?

One of the clearest interpretations modern days have given of it is, that it is something very wearisome.

And what is to live? It is to be able to chatter, to trifle away time, to strum upon the piano, to dress, to get a husband, some sweet little children, which in time will grow up, and to have an establishment, to be fêted, to be incomparable, if possible, to the very last hour, and then—one thing is lacking yet, but to that how little heed is paid!—and then to awaken and find themselves in the torments of Hell.

In truth, dear people, your ladies' institutions are a kind of school for Satan. It is bad enough

with men, but with women it is a hundred times worse.

The other day I was sauntering about near the gates of Hell. Do not be misled by the appellation! They are not the real gates of Hell, of course, which bid God and His mercy defiance. These are far deeper down, and belong to a far more terrible kingdom than the kingdom of death. I am alluding, of course, only to the guarded entrance to the place of torment.

I call it the guarded entrance, for though the gates stand wide open, and no sentry is stationed there, yet no one has ever yet succeeded to slip out through them of his own free will; on compulsion, perhaps; but, that is another matter, and then it is not for the best. I do not know, for certain, whether I actually made the attempt, but quite sure is it, that every time I approached a certain, but invisible, boundary, I felt within me an authoritative voice, saying:

"Thus far, but no farther!" None ever go out thence, that is to say, not without ghostly privileges, which means the same thing as a "ticket of leave." Any one, however, can enter in.

I do not recollect any longer how we used to reckon in the world. Was it every minute—no, surely, it was every second—that a soul

was passing away? Well, the greater number enter in at these gates of despair. If one would see Hell in all its naked misery, one must first appear here. On yonder side the gates is a thick, impenetrable, misty darkness, from which fresh shapes are ever emerging. Nay, they literally swarm, now in crowds, now singly *ad infinitum*. All of them are naked. There is none other distinction between them but what is peculiar to sex and age. The beggar and the high-born cannot be distinguished from each other, they are alike bare, equally abject-looking.

Aye! here misery is the common Adam-brand, and it would be useless to try and make its intensity conceivable. It is stamped alike on the countenances, the bearing of the poor wretches, and on the way in which they come. The road to Hell is easy and pleasant at first, but it becomes very arduous at last. Most of them creep along it, in a state of semi-consciousness, in a nervous dread, and know not how they are situated.

It is, indeed, a sight which the world would term *unique*. You who cannot get enough of a sensational or piquant nature in the world, might get your fill here. I, for my part, could not endure it long.

Everything here is matchless, so much the worse, and piquant in the very truest mean-

ing of the word. Everything goes to the heart with a sting; but not two, out of all our numberless pains, are alike. On the present occasion, it seemed just as if everything within me was turned upside down. Perhaps you will say it was only the anguish and smart of self-love. Still, my friend, perhaps not entirely. There was something in that anguish, that smart, which was of a better nature. I could have wept over myself and others.

However strange as it may seem, I had great difficulty in getting away from the place. It was only by cutting the matter very short with myself, that I was able to tear myself away, and then seek in solitude to digest the bitter thoughts which my experience had evoked within.

But solitude was not vouchsafed me, for I soon noticed that I was not alone in this lonely spot. Deep sighs, and a low, wailing moaning, sounded close by me.

Such occurrences are so common in Hell, that one is apt to pay no attention to them. But here I was away from the throng, and it was a single, whining voice I heard. I went a few steps in the direction of the sound, and presently found a wretched, crouching form, the very image of despair and of abject misery. He was an old man, but so abject did he seem, that

there were no signs of reverence about him. His nakedness showed me that he had only recently made his entry into Hell; while the crown that he wore upon his head, cocked as it were on one side, convinced me that I had a king before me. Had I been in the humour, I must have laughed at the sight of his crown, which was dangling all on one side, and seemed in such comical apposition to its original destination, for it was now merely a symbol of the derangement which had seized the poor wretch.

As soon as he saw me, he crawled towards me, embraced my knees, and clung to me, as he exclaimed, in a tremulous voice:

"Are you a human being? Are you a good, compassionate, human being? Oh, then, pity me! Do not leave me! . . . Where am I? . . . Oh! I am perishing from fright and from torment!"

So abject was his condition, that I really felt compassion for him. I could not, therefore, find in my heart to tell him where he was, but expressed the word HELL in as round-about a way as I could.

For a few moments he remained in deep thought, and then broke out again in a piteous wail:

"Oh, miserable being that I am! Trample me under foot; spit on my beard if you please.

I deserve it! . . . Listen to me. I will confess all my folly and pitifulness to you. . . .

"You perceive, then, that I am a king? I came to the throne at an advanced age, and succeeded to a powerful and flourishing kingdom. But that was not enough! A worm gnawed within me. I could not rest content with simply insuring the happiness of my subjects, I longed to attain a warlike reputation, like the most renowned of my forefathers. In a moment of vanity, I had assumed the title of Emperor. This high-sounding word involved great demands. I must put my foot on the neck of some petty king or other.

"Already I was an old man; there was no time to lose. Till then my conscience was unburdened. I might have closed my eyes in peace and with a sure confidence. But I was fool enough to look away from the thousand blessings I enjoyed. A war, then, I must wage. But I did not dare to wage one with my great and powerful neighbours.

Far down among the mountains dwelt a small, impoverished people. They were a pastoral race. Their king scarce reached up to my knee. Him I selected for my enemy. I was firmly resolved not to grant him peace on any condition. I heaped wrong upon wrong, treachery upon treachery, and violence upon violence; thus at last I got him

to fight a battle in desperation. The blood of thousands was shed; but of course I won an easy victory. Listen further, and hear to what a pitch I carried my vanity. From first to last it was a monstrous lie, an impudent fabrication; and, at any rate, in such a contest there could be no honour to gain. But for all that I deceived myself with the idea that I was only acting in accordance with my rights, and was fulfilling my duty towards my fatherland; that it was a magnanimous, noble exploit I had achieved, an heroic deed from which I could not but reap a lasting reputation.

"But my laurels cost me dear, though I had thought to win them cheaply. I was able to delude myself to a certain extent, but I could not befool the world. The whole world despised me in their hearts, though they brayed out their praises of me. So that in reality I had but little enjoyment from my acquired notoriety.

"But worse was yet in store!

"Even still all might have been well. I knew God to be a merciful Lord. Had I only awakened to a penitent acknowledgment of my folly and crime, I might have found pardon even for this sin. But I hardened myself against the truth, and to the end of my life continued to hold fast by the de-

lusion that I was a hero in the cause of honour and of right, whose name would be handed down to remotest generations with glory.

"In the midst of this delusion I departed from life; not for the kingdom of Heaven, where a place was already prepared for the pious old man—alas, me! No, not to the kingdom of Heaven! To the very last Satan tempted me, and I went to Hell!

"Yes, only tell me at once, dear stranger! We are in the torments of Hell? Oh, how I detest and despise myself! Fool, wretch that I was! Oh, woe, woe is me!"

And he continued to commiserate himself. I could not do otherwise than allow that he was right. He really had conducted himself not only as a great fool, but, to speak plainly, as a great villain. But here we are villains altogether, in an endless variety. I did not leave him, therefore, till I had helped him to set matters a little straight.

Naturally you inquire, "What king it was? What was his name, his country?"

Yes, indeed, inquisitiveness plays a great part in the world. But when to this I only reply, "he was a king of Abyssinia," you are perhaps as wise as you were before. For you are, doubtless, not up in the succession of the Abyssinian monarchs, and perhaps have

scarcely ever heard the name of the last king of that country. Perhaps you do not even know that the king of Abyssinia is a Christian.

But with this information you must rest content. I met this king of Abyssinia quite recently. He was dressed then like other decent people in Hell. The crown rested on his head, and he had already begun to form a little court around him. He was evidently in a good way to make himself at home; but I cannot say that his condition was improved. For a crowd of persons, consisting of his own subjects and strangers, whom death had overtaken in the midst of their sins through his crimes, followed him wherever he went with wild and bitter curses. He was like a hunted wild beast, and could not escape out of the way; for he trembled with fear, and his crown weighed him down to the ground.

So speedily and so entirely are the conditions of existence altered, when a person does not care to see where he is walking, or what he is doing.

He sinks into the grave, and the grave is a bottomless pit to all whom God's mercy does not hold up; its bottom is only first to be found in Hell.

This king had been taken in the very midst of the intoxication of victory; now his intoxi-

cation is passed, and is succeeded by that utter prostration of mind and body—the usual accompaniments of intemperance—which prevails in an extreme degree in Hell.

He, too, had aspired to the title of the Great. Oh, how piteously small he is now; how small he tries to make himself in order to avoid his persecutors! At chance times he may succeed in doing so; but he will never be able to escape from himself. And, oh! the contempt he feels for himself is alone a greater torture than they underwent whom he so thoughtlessly sent headlong to death.

How rich in enjoyment is that earthly life when properly viewed. From Hell we can see it to be so with terrible clearness. And, I must confess, my life has been one of those that have been most richly endowed. How many happy, I am almost tempted to say blessed, moments, have I not experienced.

Not unfrequently a bell sounds in my ears. It rings and rings; its vibrating clang pierces my heart. It is the vesper bell, which I listened to so often in the world with feelings of delight.

At the first sound, straightway a rustic landscape unfolds itself to my gaze, with all the enchantment which memory alone can impart. Either it is at home among the rich

corn-fields, by wood or by lake; or amid the lofty mountains, whose glittering summits are bathed in the evening glow. The sun has just set, but it has left a glow behind it, which is ever shifting overhead in a blaze of purple or of gold. Gradually all has become hushed. Nature sinks deeper and deeper into a hallowed repose. And that it is a hallowed repose, the vesper bell from the village church proclaims.

The day's work is over; everything is making ready to rest. Those who are united in love will soon be assembled together. In the cottage, the mother is gathering her children around her, awaiting the arrival of her husband; and then, when he does come, the door is closed, and all the moil, vexations, and troubles of life are left outside. Perhaps a little grief lurks within, but it is forfeited to love. It serves but to nourish affection, and affection must subsist.

Oh that I was but the poor labourer returning homewards from the fields with the wearied team; or the ragged urchin that saunters along behind the cattle.

But the vesper bell says, "It is too late."—Yes, yes, it is too late!

What are my longings but the noose in which the despairing one hangs himself?

CHAPTER XVII.

I REVERT once more to my childhood.

It was the evening before my aunt's birthday. My present had long been in readiness; and, with a restless feeling, I brooded over it, divided, childlike, between two opposite desires. Of course the nature of my present was to be kept a profound secret from her; but, on the other hand, I was very anxious that she should have some suspicion of the surprise that was in store for her. A prey to these irreconcileable emotions, I stole down to her room.

She was not there. It was very vexatious; I must wait for her. To pass away the time I let my eyes wander round the room. Everything was in its customary place, and there was literally nothing to attract my attention. I could not help indulging in a hearty yawn. But what was that? A lovely butterfly on the window pane! In a moment I was all life. Forgetting the good advice I had received about always letting small animals be at peace, I commenced an exciting chase.

Before long I had the butterfly between my fingers. It fluttered wildly with its wings, but that was of no avail. I held it fast, and examined it in the most scrutinizing way. Presently I heard footsteps; it was my aunt! So, in great confusion, I closed my hand upon it, and turned very hot and red in the face.

My aunt entered the room with her accustomed sprightliness, and at once gave up herself to me. But I was ill at ease, and stood like a blockhead before her, without being able to get a word out. So at last she had recourse, as usual, when she wanted to enliven me, to a story. I was so fond of stories, and Aunt Betty told them so capitally. Perhaps a severer criticism than mine might have pronounced them to be of little import. She used to invent most of them as she went on. And in this her great peculiarity consisted; she was inexhaustible. However trifling or simple her tale might be, it was never without a suitable ending, and a moral that seldom failed to make an impression on me.

The moral of this evening's story was—God sees all things.

It had a great effect on me; involuntarily I hid my closed hand behind my back. My heart began to beat high. I felt uncomfortable.

"Do you see, my dear boy," she continued,

"God sits upon his lofty throne, with an angel on either side, and they each of them have a tablet in their hands. God sees everything, and will forget nothing. The angel on His right marks down all the good that man is able to do here on earth, and he smiles; oh, so very sweetly! But the angel on the left marks down all the evil, and the tears run down his cheeks, so that the writing on the tablet is ever being rubbed out, and has incessantly to be renewed. So when the last day comes, and men shall render an account of their doings in the presence of God, then will God call out in a voice of thunder, 'Bring forth the tablets.' And then it will depend on how the account stands. Have we done more evil than good, without having repented and obtained forgiveness for our sins, then may God have mercy upon us!—We shall be for ever miserable!"

This ending to the story made a terrible impression upon me. I clenched my hand so firmly, so firmly together! It was just as if there were hot ashes within it; but it was my naughty conscience that burned. The butterfly must long have been dead, but I fancied I could still feel it fluttering, and that it would force my hands open. God sees all things, and one day we should have to give an account of

everything. I could endure it no longer. I burst out into a violent flood of tears; and, without being able to utter a single word, held out my hand with the dead butterfly in it.

Aunt understood it all in a moment. She drew me towards her, and addressed me first with some gently reproachful words. Thereupon she pointed out to me that God would forgive me my sin, according as I repented and was sorry for it. But it was long before she could stop my sobs, I was so frightened, and so very grieved with myself. Never have I known anything so comforting as the tenderness displayed in my aunt's character. Then she made me fold my hands, that I might pray God to forgive me. I was deeply moved; truer worship was never offered.

But my aunt had not finished yet. It was a new story, and it must have a suitable ending, and a moral. She pressed me to her bosom, and gently urged me that,

"I should act thus my whole life through. As soon as ever I felt within myself that I had done anything wrong, I should at once go with a penitent heart and beseech God to forgive me, and promise Him never to do so more. Then the dear God would let mercy go before judgment, and I should have no need to dread the black tablet."

At last, in silent sorrow, we buried the dead butterfly in a flower-pot. We covered up its grave with rose leaves, as well as its tiny body, to prevent the dark black mould from touching it.

With a lightened heart I left my aunt. But I passed a very uneasy night, and was haunted by the wildest dreams. Again and again the terrible words rang in my ears. "Bring forth the tablets!" When I awoke it was quite dark. Hitherto I had never known what it was to be afraid of the dark; but I knew it now.

Early next morning I went to my aunt's room with my present. Contrary to custom, the door was closed; but it was immediately opened to me when I told her who it was. I was disagreeably surprised, when standing in the doorway, to see that my dear Aunt Betty was weeping in silence. Spread out before her was a row of all manner of small articles of the most varied and wonderful description. She beckoned me to approach, and embraced and kissed me in silence. I was so startled and grieved, that I quite forgot the precious present I held in my hand. The thought occurred to me, whether she, too, had crushed a butterfly to death. But it was soon diverted into another channel.

"Aunt!" I exclaimed, "did you not say yesterday evening that God sees everything? Does he then not see that you are crying?"

Aunt Betty looked up with a puzzled air. Suddenly it seemed as if a sunbeam was playing over her gentle features.

"Yes! surely He does! my sweet child," she answered, as she passionately but tenderly pressed me to her bosom; "and I am a great stupid ever to forget it, and to be grieved. He not only sees, but counts my tears!"

And she quickly dried her eyes, and looked up with a smiling face. "Can you see, my boy, how God has dried them all up in a trice? He only has to breathe upon the eye, and they are gone!"

"But why were you crying, dear aunt?"

"You would not understand, my child! To-day I am an old maid of forty years. But it is so silly to cry. Let me only be an old miss of sixty, eighty, or a hundred years, I shall not trouble over it a bit, if it be God's will. But come now, and sit by me. I have a little story to tell you."

I seated myself close by her side, and she threw her arm around me, and began as follows:

"It is long since, dear Otto, but there was once a young and pretty girl, who was just as

silly as she was pretty, for she thought the world was so delightfully beautiful, and that all its joys and happiness were in store for her. There was nothing really wicked in this, my boy; but it was a dangerous, false delusion. But she thought the world was so lovely. That she was very pretty is quite certain; but when any one told her so, she would bow her head, and cast her eyes down, as if she would sink into the earth.

"And there was one who was constantly telling her so. Oh, how handsome he was! How strong and brave! It was war time. He was the captain of a privateer, a regular desperado, they said.

"And he became dearer and dearer to her. Do you know what a ball is, my dear; I mean a regular, brilliant ball? It is a wonderful thing, half angelic, half devilish. One is carried away as in a whirlwind, and held up suspended between Heaven and Hell. Enough, that when it was over, he besought her earnestly to give him one of her gloves. I think, indeed, at this moment she would not have denied him anything. He got it; and here you see the fellow to it. It is the plain truth I am telling you."

And she showed me number one of her wonderful collection. It was an old kid glove.

"But the young girl's family said that he

was an adventurer and a rake, whom no honourable girl could have anything to do with. It was sad news for her! But he had, as it were, taken her soul from her; she loved him so dearly! And so at last they were betrothed. Here you have the ring. He wore it once on his right hand.

"She was happy now. There was only one voice in the world that had entrance to her heart, and that was his. Likely enough he had many and great faults; but that was of little import to her; she loved him just as he was. Had he been an outcast among men, I think she would all the same have held fast to him. When one has once given away one's heart—but of course you understand nothing about that.

"Well, he went out and returned home again. It was a noble ship he commanded. It was called the *Viking*. Here it is!

"He brought home one prize after another, and they yielded large sums of money. But it was said that he made away with it all, and that he was a dissipated man, who played ducks and drakes with everything."

And aunt showed me an exquisite little picture, representing a schooner at sea in full sail.

"Often he was away for a very long time. But they wrote to one another as well as they

could. Oh, what letters! She put her whole soul in them. And he—

"Here you see the letters he wrote to the young girl."

And she showed me a little packet of faded letters, carefully bound round with a faded ribbon.

"At length she heard no more from him. Oh, what she suffered during this sorrowful time! A letter did come at last. He lay ill, very ill, in a seaport town of some foreign land. Winter was coming on; but she did not shrink back for that. Taking a girl with her, she journeyed a long distance over land, and found him in a piteous state. He had fought a duel, and had been wounded. You do not know what that means, and it is not necessary that you should; but it really occurred.

"This is the bullet!

"She nursed him, and he recovered. She set him at liberty, and paid his debts. It was nothing, nothing at all! Full of penitence, he returned home with her an altered man. The explanation he gave satisfied even her family. He would not go privateering any more. It was arranged that he should command a large merchant vessel belonging to her brother, and that she should accompany him as his wife.

"Only once more were they to be separated,

never to be parted again. He had to visit his family, and arrange his affairs.

"Time passed on; the wedding-day was approaching. Happy day that was to crown all her hopes, and repay her for all her pains. The bridal dress was laid out in readiness. Here you see the bridal wreath! Do you know the myrtle? It only bears touching once a-year, and each year two leaves drop off. But it will last as long as there are eyes to look at it.

"Then a letter came. At the very last station he had turned back, never to return again. Here is the sorrowful letter, blotched all over with her tears! Oh, what it cost her to answer it!

"Was he, then, wicked? No; only fickle! He had got entangled in a web of thoughtless engagements, from which he could not extricate himself. His uncle, whose heir he was, had a daughter. God bless her! He had plighted his faith on two sides. Men do such things, and not so unfrequently. But, of course, he could only keep it on one side. He fulfilled his duty towards her who perhaps had suffered the most through him, and who —but it is not worth dwelling upon. Enough to say that he became a steady and honest man, and has, I hope, obtained pardon for the sins of his youth.

"But she who had cheerfully given up everything for him could never settle to anything; and with beauty, happiness, future prospects, it was all over. By degrees she became old and ugly, and lived only for the little good she was able to show to others. For though it be an evil world, all people are not evil, but many of them are unfortunate, and require a little aid, poor things! In a word, my love, God was her comfort!"

Thus aunt ended her story, and thereupon began to pack up her treasures very carefully.

When she had done she said, "So, now it is all over. It is time to be thinking about dinner."

Of course I did not understand a word of it, neither was it necessary that I should. The old maid had longed to relieve her heart to a human being; but she would not let out her secret.

Now I remember every single word, and understand it perfectly; both the story itself, and what she felt at that hour, and how heavy her heart must have felt on her fortieth birthday since she lightened it to me, a little ignorant child.

At the dinner-table Aunt Betty was exceedingly merry. She made speeches at which everybody laughed; and she was brimming over with witty remarks for the rest of the day.

But those words—"God sees everything"—often returned to my recollection, even at a riper age. It was, however, more the dread than the comfort contained in them that made the impression upon me. So different was I to my good, pious aunt. But the time soon came when it was in my power to throw these terribly ominous words to the winds. And soon the time came when I crushed one butterfly after the other to death without feeling any great prickings of conscience.

It must certainly have been the case that some time or other you gave up a whole or half a day to looking through, sorting, or destroying old letters and papers. Then you shut to the door in order not to be disturbed; you made yourself comfortable, lighted your cigar, and set to work.

It was not any hard work; but still you must allow that you became rather red in the face, and that at the expiration of a few hours you felt yourself wonderfully exhausted and spent. What was it that thus excited you, made you so uneasy in spirit, and taxed your strength? It was not the labour, for that was nothing. No; it was the recollections, which came streaming in upon you one after the other. And yet, perhaps, the greater number

of them were pleasant ones; aye, more than pleasant, rich in joy, precious.

After this you will be able to form a faint idea of what in one respect we have to suffer here. Recollections come crowding in, and most of them sorrowful, because they are evil. They come without any cause, spontaneously, and without any limitation. It is not a few reminiscences here and there, that by chance get furbished up; but all the recollections of a whole life, which perforce press themselves in. We may leave the good ones out of the reckoning, though these, too, can inflict sorrow, regret, and pain. But the evil ones! Their name is Legion! And each of them presses forward with its claim. There is no sin so little, or so mean, during the whole career of our lives, that does not step forward and raise its accusing voice. For justice is the very groundwork of existence; though here it first becomes manifest.

And you must not think only of evil or of heedless actions; every evil or thoughtless word we have spoken, yes, every thought, has the same fearful claim upon us. Like the Parthian horsemen they swarm round us in triple columns, each striking a blow in turn, or discharging a poisoned shaft, and again withdrawing to make room for others. Ah! the comparison fails; so much the worse!

Some of these evil recollections never cease after the first gash, but become incorporated, as it were, into the bleeding heart.

Can you realize the nature and the extent of this suffering? Do you realize to what a degree we must feel ourselves exhausted by the numbers, and by the strength of these recollections? And there is no cessation, no alleviation! For though the suffering be not always equally intense, yet there can be no mention made of alleviation in Hell.

Oh, these recollections! this remorse! I am daily tempted to say that they are unendurable; but still we endure them. And most terrible of all is it when they break out suddenly upon us from an ambush and pierce a dagger into the heart. What has been forgotten for twenty, thirty, or even for a greater number of years, suddenly stands out as plain as life before one, as if it had risen up from the dead. Yes, it is exactly as if the grave opened itself. Every wrong thing that we have done in our lifetime, from the greatest to the least, comes forth.

Oh, my friend! impress this upon yourself, and upon all you love, that "it is useless, useless to forget!"

But I must not quite discard the orderly and decorous social life we seek to live here.

Even the most experienced may at times break out, and I should be constantly breaking out if I did not lay a strong check on my restless spirit.

One of the great ruling tendencies in the world is to pass the time away, and for that ten thousand and the most incredible means have been invented. Whether ungodliness or foolishness is the most prominent in this, it is not easy to decide.

There are few words that so exactly describe the world's perversion as this—Pastime.

Time is synonymous with life; one must live, and thus one beguiles the time; yes, that is just why one does it. It is time that through joy and sorrow gradually develops the fullness of existence both within and without; and however full of ambition one may be, it must be beguiled. Yes, it must be beguiled, and that is called to live; and after time comes death, which only waits for it to come to an end. Pastime thus becomes an endless and ridiculous attempt at suicide. One beguiles the time as if it were some frightful monster, an enemy to life and happiness; but the monster first appears when time is no more.

All the treasures of Golconda cannot weigh against the contents of a single day, aye, nor of a single hour. Each hour, as it were, brims over with blessings. Of what value

then must time be in its full and free extent? Its measure is only to be found in Heaven, where the Love which created it sits enthroned.

Here in Hell we have emerged from all such misty clouds, and also from that which the world calls pastime. The naked truth and reality surround us on all sides. In time all the fullness of life, and all the blessings love could devise, were offered to us with a Father's hand. But we behaved as you do; we trod understanding under foot; we passed away the time, and knew not what we did. Now it is past—quite past—and all hope has gone with it. But we, too, are past—quite past—doomed to Hell, out of the pale of existence, never more to return.

In the world the theatre was one of our principal sources of amusement wherewith to beguile the time. We, too, have our theatre here, though there is no longer any time to beguile. It is only an old custom that makes it necessary to us. Here, too, women must have something to rave about, and men something to go mad with admiration for; women and men together, something to talk and converse about. Weather with us is no object; the more necessary, therefore, is a theatre.

Our theatre is after a peculiar style, and on a grand scale, to which the world, even that world in the world—I mean Paris—cannot

produce an equal. The *répertoire*, so far as it depends upon poetical composition, is certainly rather poor. It is but seldom that a piece in the world is vulgar enough to come down here; frivolity, insipidity, and emptiness are the prevailing fashion, and that naturally cannot yield a large return. But we have a way of our own of providing the stage with pieces, and it will, doubtless, be acknowledged that theatrical effect in the world is like water when compared with what it is here.

With the exception of a few pieces handed down to us from the world our *répertoire* consists of actual occurrences. And not only that, but our actors, too, are the very persons connected with those occurrences. They merely repeat on the stage what they have enacted in the world. There is no illusion here, therefore; ideally, a complete reality is offered. What is represented has actually taken place, and been enacted by these very actors.

We have theatre directors in abundance. In the world it was a very troublesome post, an endless source of annoyance. How often has it not been termed a regular Hell? But it is here that directors first begin to realize the Hell. They have to vie with each other, and strain every nerve in order to bring something on the stage that is interesting, exciting, dreadful, or touching. Yes, strange enough, we,

too, must be moved, but, unfortunately, cannot be. First, a hunt must be made after something that has occurred (alias a drama). Next, the persons connected with this drama must be ferreted out, and they are often dispersed over all parts of Hell. But when found they must obey orders at once, and act their proper parts. Yet it is difficult to find them out and collect them together.

Perhaps an example will best illustrate my meaning.

A play was lately performed, entitled "The Jewels." It is a tale of seduction, accompanied by murder and robbery, and is composed with diabolical ingenuity. A pretty, good, but simple-hearted woman, was seduced; but her seduction was merely the means to the object, not the object itself. That was neither more nor less than a robbery of jewels, in the perpetration of which two cruel murders were requisite. It is really a powerful piece; though, in a sense, quite different to that in which the word is used in the world; because here there is no invention in it; in all its parts, down to the very minutest details, it is real fact. I can even still remember reading the horrible case in the papers; the sensation it created was enormous. They are the very same persons who perform the parts here; villains, of course, all of them. The virtuous

characters naturally, in a great measure, are not under the director's command.

The immense advantage of this is readily perceptible. We have real murderers, real cheats, rascals and villains, real seducers, &c., &c., and everything has really been enacted as represented on the stage.

The real characters perform their parts under compulsion, and under inconceivable suffering, but with a literal truthfulness. To fill up the parts of the virtuous characters, in default of better, they use accomplished hypocrites, of which there is never any lack, and which have very great pleasure in availing themselves of the opportunity of displaying their talents. These parts, too, are represented in the most perfect manner.

It is a natural consequence, that in all these pieces no worldly code of morals is followed; we are far beyond that sort of thing. The good is far from always triumphing; and, on the other hand, it is not always the evil. It takes what course it can, or rather the very course it once followed.

Meanwhile, again I must say strange enough, those pieces in which right and justice triumph produce an infinitely greater effect than those where evil predominates. These are made a subject of scorn and contempt.

The scenery—of course there can be no talk

about decorations—is not to be surpassed. I am, of course, only speaking of an illusion, but the illusion is perfect. We are able to reproduce any spot or locality, only of course as a shadow; but still the resemblance is perfect. It appears to the very life; true and real. Sometimes the pictures produce an indescribable effect. Many a soul is well nigh driven mad at the sight of the well-known spot, and conducts himself like one beside himself with pain, longing, and regret.

On the whole, it is evident that these representations produce a very striking impression. But there is nothing satisfying in them; on the contrary, the pain is intense, equally so to actors as to spectators. But in this respect as in all others, there is an implacable law. It is no longer the law of Liberty, as in the world; it is the law of Necessity.

We must! It is one word too much, and there all discussion ends.

END OF VOL. I.

LETTERS FROM HELL.

VOL. II.

LETTERS FROM HELL.

BY

M. ROWEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, 8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET
AND COPENHAGEN.
1866.

LETTERS FROM HELL.

CHAPTER XVIII.

My last letter ended with a short description of the theatre in Hell. It has brought the system in which your theatres are managed to my thoughts. It is but very indifferent, always deteriorating, always going backwards.

But is it true that you have begun to act plays in your churches, and to hold divine service in your theatres? It is not incredible! The world is perverted, and will ever be so more and more.

But I have heard that the use of opera glasses has become quite general in churches—that people subscribe to them just as they do to theatres, if they wish to have a seat, is already an old, a very old story—that on these solemn occasions they clamber up anywhere, wherever they

can get, just as in a circus; even up on the pulpit, and the monuments, to say nothing of on each other's backs, so as to be able to see: about hearing, which according to old-fashioned notions was the principal thing, they do not trouble themselves a bit. So that your sole aim is to witness a spectacle in the hallowed places. It is no happy direction, forsooth, your piety has elected to take! You take Heaven by storm, like a modern race of Titans; but it is only a theatre's Heaven!

But, *apropos*, surely you do not applaud and hiss?

On the other hand, the subject appears no less credible. Even in my time the religious element had begun to walk the boards with delicate and mincing steps. I know more than one piece, the idea of which is of a religious character; its external decoration, in a great measure, ecclesiastical. And I know several that are of a purely biblical nature. Of course, the subject of these last is taken from the Old Testament. But, as is well-known, it is but a step from the Old to the New Testament; and that, a step which few can avoid taking, unless they be Jews. I should not, therefore, be surprised to learn that they have introduced pieces in which the Lord and the Twelve Apostles figure. The Revela-

tion of St. John must be able to yield wonderful materials for scenes and tableaux on a grand scale. In the Catholic Church, indeed, they have long since arrived at the extreme limit of all that can be deduced in this direction, seeing that they represent the whole history of the Passion in the grandest dramatical style. Something similar is said to take place here in the so-called City of the Jews. But there of course it is quite a different affair; it is neither edifying nor amusing. But enough of this for the moment!

If ever it should occur to you to publish these letters—and though they were not written with that object in view, yet on my part I shall offer no objection to your doing so—their authenticity will naturally be stoutly contested, and among other questions, it will be asked:

"Even if the letters were written in Hell, how could they come from Hell to the world!"

How strange people can be! There is scarcely a single person who has not heard speak of ghosts; there are numbers who believe in the existence of ghosts. Well then, if there are ghosts, why should there not also be ghost-letters? And what can be more reasonable than the supposition, that those liberated souls which return to the world should oblig-

ingly undertake to forward them to their destination?

This is in fact the way in which it is arranged; all letters go out from here when an opportunity offers; and, believe me, their number is greater than you might suppose.

As many letters as you have received from me, so many different ghosts have been in your house. Stay; do not be alarmed! It is not to every one I entrust my letters: they are all particularly decent ghosts, and if it was not from a feeling of innate aversion you would probably find several of them extremely entertaining. Moreover, they have expressly to engage on no account to annoy you, but to go about their errands quietly and silently. All ghosts are by no means ill-disposed, capricious, and refractory; there are some very estimable ghosts, to whom one could well entrust the whole world.

You may know, then, that whenever you find a letter from me in the morning that you have had a visit from a ghost during the night. And you will find by experience that it is really of no importance.

Did you not find a letter under your desk a short time ago? I will tell you how it was. When you laid your pen aside overnight, you, doubtless without thinking, happened to lay it crossways with the pencil. On suddenly per-

ceiving this symbol my messenger became so terrified that he dropped the letter in the spittoon and fled away.

Now I come to think of it, I wish you would do away with those superfluous fowls in your yard. You surely might do us that kindness. In a mortal's ear, a cock-crow may sound very refreshing indeed; but on us immortals, on the other hand, it makes a piercing, ill-omened impression. It is a warning that the dawn is at hand, though it may even yet be distant; and about the last day and the resurrection, which surely will come, though yet it may tarry long.

Excuse my bad writing! They are the most abominable pens they give us; more than half worn out in the service of unrighteousness and of scribbling; and the paper is so thin they will make holes in it. I have only at hand some old false documents, let me see, from the year 853. On closer inspection, I find that it is a collection of Isidore's decrees. I am obliged to use great caution in dividing them, or rather in peeling them into thin films, as fine as moonshine.

And the ink, my friend! Ah, what would you say if I told you it was my own heart's blood? It is black enough, and so much the worse, but, as you see, it is thick and muddy.

I need scarcely remind you that my letters will not bear keeping. They are only the glimmering of a nightly vapour that quickly dissolves in the light and reality of day, and vanish. You must therefore always read them at once, and, if you wish to preserve their contents, copy them.

I am thinking of getting the letter I am now writing conveyed by a very remarkable man, whom I reckon among the most interesting acquaintances I have. He is just bound on an excursion to the world. He is one of Charles the Bold's Paladins, who met his death by a Swiss spear at Murten. Stiff and erect he marches about in full accoutrements; not even the spurs are wanting, though they will ring no longer, nor the helmet plume which no breeze will ever wave again. He always keeps his vizor down, and though I have often had many a good conversation with him, I have never yet got to see his face. He is ashamed of himself, so far as I can make out. Never has he been able to forget that he, the renowned, chivalrous knight, succumbed under the hand of a wretched peasant.

His knightly dignity seldom allows him to associate with any one; and he drags out his dark, monotonous existence in his armour in more than monastic solitude.

It was quite accidental that I came in closer contact with him. I happened on one occasion to be in a public place, where, in my old style, I began to speak in admiration of the splendid wine of Beaune, adding that I had drunk it on the spot. When the others had left, I found myself alone with the man in armour.

"You have been in Burgundy?" he inquired, in a hollow voice.

"Yes, noble sir!"

"And in Beaune, near Dijon?"

Again I answered in the affirmative.

"Côte d'or, lovely, ever to be remembered land!" he muttered in his vizor, and went away with his head bowed and his arms crossed.

Thereupon ended our first interview; but we met frequently afterwards. By degrees he seemed to take a liking to me. He told me many things about Charles the Bold's magnificent court; his grand martial hosts; about the future the proud Burgundian had looked forward to; about battles and tournaments, whence he too had brought away many a trophy. He never alluded to Granson or Murten. I, on the other hand, had to tell him of the present condition and circumstances of the former Duchy of Burgundy; about the power and exploits of the French Empire; about the

recent inventions in the art of warfare, and of the manner in which battles were decided now. He listened to me in sheer amazement.

But I managed to excite his full interest and gain his entire confidence when I happened to give him an account of my sojourn among the Sevennes, and the charming heights that branch out from them, bearing the significant title Côte d'or. In my description of these regions, and from my experiences there, I was able to enter into minute particulars. He asked question upon question, but there seemed to be one question which was continually on his lips, but which he could not bring himself to put. At last I happened to allude to the Castle Roux. When I mentioned this name, a shudder passed through him, after which he became perfectly still and listened with breathless attention to my tale.

There was a great deal to say about the Castle Roux; and when I noticed how deeply his interest was aroused, I was not backward in telling him all I knew. It is an ancient mountain castle, recently restored after its original quaint plan; and, what is but seldom the case with these old castles, is held in great esteem by its owner, who makes a point of living there a great portion of the year.

The family is very old; but the original

name Roux has had to give way to another, not unknown in the annals of France.

The old castle, which in itself is a very remarkable structure, is very rich in curiosities. I conducted my listener everywhere with me within the venerable walls, through the labyrinthine corridors, up and down the neck-breaking winding stairs; from the battlements, whence a good view was to be had over the whole of that lovely, blessed country; down into the terrible vaults, that were cut out from the solid rock, where no ray of light ever pierced; through apartments and halls, from the armoury to the Knight's Hall—in short, everywhere.

There was only one place into which I could not take him, namely, into the so-called Red Chamber; for I had never been able to see it myself. It was locked, and had never been trod by human foot, I was told. Several hundred years ago some terrible scene had been enacted there; but what it was I could not learn. On the whole, the house-steward who conducted me round seemed very reserved respecting the secret history of the castle, and of the family. Certainly, he told me a good many traditions connected with the castle and its neighbourhood, but none of them were of much importance. What made the memory of

the old place ineffaceable was told me in a little village inn where I passed a couple of nights.

They had nothing definite, however, to tell me about the closed chamber. But there was another story connected with the place which was very remarkable. It was about the so-called "Cold Hand."

It was said that as often as the head of the family had been on the point of undertaking something which would either redound to the injury or ignominy of the house, he felt the pressure of the "Cold Hand" at the critical moment. The same instant he stretched out his hand to bid a welcome, to seize the sword or the pen, an icy cold hand was laid upon his; not, however, always on the hand, but sometimes upon the chin, the neck, or the head. For centuries, down to the present day, the "Cold Hand" has never quitted the family. The last time it was felt was in the time of the late head of the family, when he was first thinking of marrying, at a very youthful age. Just as he was about to lay hold of the pen, and sign the marriage contract, in the Knight's Hall, where the company were assembled, the "Cold Hand" was laid upon his right hand, which was already stretched out in the very act of writing. Terrified, and turning as pale as a corpse, the pen fell from

his hand. The marriage was broken off; neither prayers nor threats could ever induce the intended bridegroom to fulfil the contract. Scandal was busy, and gave rise to all sorts of reports, in addition to the story of the "Cold Hand," which was already well known.

I ended my tale with the remark that in such family traditions one was at liberty to believe just as much or as little as one pleased, and that it was difficult to be able to form any decided opinion about the matter.

But on this point the man in armour did not agree with me. He shook his head, and said, in a hollow tone:

"It is truth, man; word for word! I am the Count of Roux, the last of that name! I am the 'Cold Hand!'"

Involuntarily I drew back, so deeply rooted are the instincts we bring with us from the world.

Here, of course, no one is afraid of ghosts; here all hands are cold.

The Count of Roux sighed, or rather groaned deeply. . . . .

"Listen to me," he said; "I will tell you my history."

"I never could make out clearly why I am

come into the torments of Hell; it must have been, if such a thing is conceivable, because I was too religious in the world. For I was devoted to the priesthood, heart and soul, and took all its commandments upon me.

"In the valleys of the Sevennes, which, with the Côte d'or, issue from the mountains, a colony of Provençals had for centuries taken up their residence. They were a peaceable, intelligent, orderly race, and in a material point of view a real boon to the estate. But they were heretics, and formed a separate religious community by themselves. They were a remnant of the Albigenses, who had been scattered about in these parts, and had immigrated under the title of "Sabot people," or poor folks from Lyons.

"For a long time they had kept their dissenting views a profound secret, contented if only they could find a refuge and a home. But after a time, when they became more powerful, they allowed their heresies to become more manifest. They maintained, for instance, that the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue should be accessible to every one; and that it was unnecessary to believe anything but what the Scriptures taught, and what was in accordance with the Apostolic Church. A dangerous doctrine, indeed! And the time, of course,

must needs come when the priesthood should put forth their whole strength to extirpate and root it out. That critical time arrived in my age. As an obedient son of the Church, I closed my eyes to the destruction I was preparing for myself, and chased the heretics out of my domains without any mercy. It was an Albigensian Crusade in miniature. A third part of my estate, hitherto the most flourishing, henceforth became a very desert. Certainly, nothing else could have made me adhere to my good purpose than the conviction that I was thereby assuring myself a place in the kingdom of Heaven, an opinion in which all the priesthood, from the highest to the lowest, confirmed me.

"However, at a later period I was well nigh repenting it. The Church, for which I had done so much, would in reality do nothing for me. On the contrary, they laid every conceivable impediment in the way to my union with the fair Cyrilla of Breville, whom I had made the object of my affections. As an excuse, they alleged that I was distantly related to her. What difficulties, what humilities, I had to undergo! I besought, I threatened, I lavished money away. My high-born prince interested himself powerfully in my case. I had to go as a pil-

grim to Rome, and at last, after two years of fighting and of tribulation, I led my bride to the altar.

"In truth had I been able to call the 'Sabot people' back, I think I should have done so! But that was impossible.

"So Cyrilla became my wife, and was doubly dear, because she had cost me so much, and had been so true to me. For I had had a rival, apparently a dangerous one, in the Count of Tournailles. There would have been no impediment in the way of a union with him; but she had preferred to wait, and to wait long, in order to keep her promise to me. For five or six years I was supremely happy; those were the brightest days of my life. We were blessed with two children, a boy and a girl. There was nothing wanting to complete my happiness.

"At that time Duke Charles called his faithful vassals to arms. With a valiant but bleeding heart I tore myself away and obeyed the summons. With the history of that unhappy war you are of course acquainted. We gained an easy victory over Lorraine, and then set out against the Swiss. Granson, Murten, terrible recollections!

"I do not even now understand how it really happened; there must have been some hellish trick in it. At Murten I fell, perished in great

distress, and opened my eyes here in torment.

"I, who had so surely relied on coming into the kingdom of Heaven, flung headlong into a corner of Hell, by a peasant's stalwart fist! The shame, the indignation, can never be overcome.

"And my lovely wife! My infant children! To shame and indignation succeeded a consuming longing. I could find no peace; I must back to the world, cost what it might.

"Thus I began to reappear as a ghost. My first nocturnal wandering on earth is eternally imprinted on my mind. Though the places by which I approached my former home were well and intimately known to me, I felt myself as a perfect stranger, so ill was I at ease. I had a feeling like that which a malefactor must have when bent upon the foul deed by night. The smallest sound terrified me, even though it were but a withered leaf falling to the earth. I could easily have shortened my suffering, and have reached my home in a trice; but it was as if I were compelled to protract my torture by slowly creeping from place to place, and by draining the bitter waters of memory, once so sweet, to the very dregs. At length I emerged from the grove, trembling all over. The castle lay in the bright moonlight close before me.

I hovered about among the shadows. Oh, what a change had taken place in me! I was still the same person, but I knew myself no longer. I could have wept bitterly at that hour. In my lifetime no tear ever came up into my eyes, when I could have wept. But now, after death, I longed so to weep, but could not. I could only shudder and shake. I was as unnerved as if I had been afraid of ghosts; but it was myself that was the ghost, and I had nothing to fear.

"Oh, what a welcome home! The vane on the turret creaked, so that it cut me to the heart; the dogs howled; the cattle became uneasy in their stalls. Was it not my favourite charger that was pawing the ground?

"Thief-like I stole into the castle, and glided through the corridors, from room to room. How empty, how comfortless, it all was!

"I must see my children first. I found them in the sweet slumber of innocence, so fresh, so radiant, beaming with health and strength. The nurse lay in a deep sleep, and was snoring loudly. Never had I felt as I did now. My heart burned with a tenderness that was quite, quite in vain. There they lay before me, my own flesh and blood; but they were mine no longer. I had no part in them. I dared not take them in my arms, and hug them to my

breast; they would have died from terror. I could only sigh and turn hastily away and vanish. Here was a Heaven, but I, their father, was in Hell!

"So I passed along the way I had so often gone to our bed-room with its bridal couch. It is that room which is locked, and which is never entered by any one. I paused at the threshold, overwhelmed by strange feelings. I should see her once more; her!

"I saw her again, resting in another man's arms; and this man was my former rival, the Count of Tournailles!

"For a moment I was, as it were, paralyzed at the unholy sight. She was lying, beautiful as ever, with her bosom half exposed, in his arms. Oh, nameless agony! I, I to whom she had sworn an eternal fidelity, was not only forgotten, but betrayed. How false, then, was that lovely bosom! Unhappy one, hast thou forgotten thine oaths, or is it thus that thou honourest my memory?

"In impotent fury I clenched my hands, and set my chattering teeth together. What could I do? At least I would awaken her. I extended my arm farther and farther over the bed, and laid my hand upon her naked shoulder. She started up at the icy touch; she saw me—I must have been a terrible

sight — and then, uttering a wailing cry, swooned away.

"My indignation knew no bounds. From that hour I persecuted her wherever she went. When she least expected it, she had to feel my cold hand. But she never saw me again; and this I think made my presence all the more terrible. It was especially at night that I watched her; never again did she find any rest in his arms. My cold hand lay between them. Day by day they became paler and wasted away; at last they could endure it no longer, and mutually agreed to separate. She went into a convent. Thenceforth I had to leave her in peace. In the convent she gave birth to a son, who became the founder of the new family at the Castle Roux.

"My own children died. That was the last great sorrow I had in the world above. But it changed my heart as it were; I felt a sort of contrition. Perhaps I had been too severe with her. A dead man is no man, and has no longer any claims. She, however, was a young woman in whom the warmth of life still glowed; nature and the world had still their claims upon her. I subjected myself to a kind of penance. I swore a solemn oath that I would watch over Cyrilla's son by her new marriage and over his posterity throughout all time.

"From that time dates the 'Cold Hand' in the Castle Roux. I have an infallible feeling when any one of the family is about to take any disastrous step, or form any calamitous determination. So I have no longer any peace in Hell, but must wander back to the world. And at the critical moment I interfere. With but few exceptions every head of the house in this family, man or woman, has felt the 'Cold Hand' one or more times, and thus it will continue till the family exists no more.

"Even now I feel myself summoned again in my heart; in a little while I must return once more to earth. What is happening I do not know; but I know my time, and the 'Cold Hand' will never fail in its errand."

Thus ended the Count of Roux, and sank into a deep reverie, soon after which he left me. But I shall meet him again, and I hope he will be the bearer of the present letter.

You naturally ask, "Shall you not come yourself some time or other? Why do others come, and not you?"

I scarcely know how to answer. Truly, I feel it might be that I paid a flying visit to the world. It depends upon a certain inward necessity. If I felt it, naturally I should have

to go. But it would not be for the best; it would be but an addition to my sufferings, and, therefore, I shudder at the thought. I do not know, but I have an idea that the Devil has his hand in it. God certainly mixes up in nothing here.

If one, however, has got a *permission* from Hell, the whole world lies open to him. But that, in reality, would only mean, "that a place of torment, number two, has been found." It is a fearful thought, is it not? It brings all the anguish of death back to my heart.

No, now I hope to be confined to Hell to fulfil my sufferings in a natural way.

Say now, if you dare, that one cannot hope in Hell!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE evening is the enjoyable part of the day in Italy. But as my mother was not fond of walking, Lili and I mostly used to go out alone. Venice, Firenze, Naples, enchanting reminiscences! Ah! understand me aright, I do not mean now, but when I was in the world.

These evenings were indescribably lovely and enjoyable. Nature was at peace, and however restless the day may have been, there was peace, too, in the heart. For I walked with Lili by my side, and though in the middle of the throng I was alone with her. And all around us was so wonderfully beautiful. Poetry can discover naught more enchanting than I experienced in those evening hours. Yes, it was full reality, though to the end of my life it seemed more like a dream or a fairy life, surrounded by a brilliancy and a perfume which belonged not to the world. And, let me add, it seems so still.

But it was from the lovely evenings in Firenze that I derived the purest, the most

spiritual, and, therefore, the most perfect enjoyment. First we visited "Piazza del Granduca," the central point of public life in the town. Surrounded by magnificent old buildings, built on a large and noble scale, paved and brilliantly lighted up, it resembles a noble saloon of enormous dimensions. The sky was so dark that it looked like a fixed covering arching over with its countless brilliant stars. And it was so sheltered, and yet so cool, that neither wind nor scorching sun could ever penetrate there.

Here, straight before one, the ancient palace, with its lofty mediæval tower, rears itself up into the sky. It has looked down on the crowded masses in the times of the free republic, on Dante, Michael Angelo, and the martyr Savonarola. Just outside it are two colossal statues, the one representing David; the other Hercules. On one side, and a little in the background, the noble fountain with Neptune, Tritons, and Fauns, on the very spot where, according to the story, Savonarola once suffered death at the stake. Close by it is the equestrian statue of Comus of Medici, a master-work by Giambologna. On the opposite side, the old pilastered hall, bearing the name of Loggia dei Lanzi, and raised some steps above the level, may be seen. The ascent is guarded by two

antique lions. Here, by the light of lamps, are exposed to public view some of the choicest works of art Italy possesses: Perseus the Deliverer, by the great master Benvenuto Cellini; Judith and Holofernes; Hercules and the Centaur; the famous marble group, by Giambologna, named the Rape of the Sabine Women; and the hero Ajax, supporting the dying Patroclus in his arms. In the background a row of antique priestesses, in size larger than life.

There is something magical, something inspiring, in these sublime works in the artificial light. And it produces a peculiarly happy impression to know that these works of art, which are exposed to public view, and which are accessible to all at any time, are, as it were, entrusted to the innate regard for the beautiful and the grand of the great multitude for their safe custody.

Oh! fool that I am! Am I not writing a kind of æsthetical narrative? And from Hell! Do not laugh, my friend; I cannot laugh with you. So great is the power memory exerts over me. I am running away every moment, though I can never run away from myself. These reminiscences are my life, my all! Still they are not as a pitcher from which one may drink a draught of intoxication; but a

goblet whence one quaffs poison, a poison, though, that is not deadly, but only produces unspeakable torture.

Bear with me! I will see that I keep my flighty imagination in better check for the future.

We wandered about from one to the other, now and then exchanging a few hasty words, with a calm, peaceful joy, for which the world has no name, elevated by a feeling that hovered on the borders of reality and enchantment. And when we had thus feasted on them for a while, we would turn into the faintly lighted arcades that wind through the noble Palazzo degli Uffizii. Here we would converse again in our usual confidential manner. The enchantment was over; but we were full of its effects. We had so much to tell one another. Yes, how confidential and earnest! Her arm rested on mine so closely and confidingly; there was an expression of affection in her whole being that enchanted me. Her slightest movement did not escape my notice; it seemed as if I could hear her heart beat. And how sweet it was to lead her to understand what she had seen, and to awaken new feelings in her pure young heart.

And when it grew late we would return over the open space by the Cathedral.

Here all was still, and not so brightly illuminated but that the moonlight could assert its supremacy. Maria del Fiore is this church's name; and truly it deserves it. Florence signifies the flowering; but the cathedral is the flower, at all events the heart's flower, of Florence's glory. It took a hundred and fifty years in growing up from the earth, but then it appeared in a size and splendour hitherto unknown. Its dome not only commands the whole of the town, but of the entire valley.

Close by, the graceful bell-tower, ornamented with costly sculpture, rears itself up to a height of nearly three hundred feet. Not far distant is the ancient baptistry, with its three wondrous bronze doors, of one of which Michael Angelo remarked, that it was fitting to be one of the gates of Paradise. Outside it is a rough hewn stone bench. Here Lili often used to rest herself when wearied with her long but enjoyable walk. It was the same bench whereon Dante had so often sat, sunk in a deep reverie about Paradise and Hell, and about Beatrice.

One evening I asked, "Which place do you like best, Lili?"

"It is lovely, indescribably lovely in the Piazza," she replied, "but it is but a strange, a heathenish grandeur. Here, however, Chris-

tian-like thoughts come in, and I feel myself at home."

"Then you like yourself best here?"

"Yes, there is remarkable difference between here and there. I have a lively feeling that how ever far one may travel in the world, to Christ we must ever return. The world, with all its splendour, has naught to give compared with what He can give us."

"Oh! that I were a Christian like you are, Lili!" I broke out involuntarily. And, without knowing it, I pressed her hand, which lay in mine, so hard that it must have given her pain.

She kept back a cry of anguish, and looked up in my face with an astonished and disturbed air.

"Otto!" she said seriously, "I have nothing to say against your humbling yourself. But do not humiliate me by such a remark! I am but a poor child to you."

"Yes, Lili; that is just why you feel with a child-like heart. Is it not an old and sacred truth, 'Out of the mouth of babes shall truth be heard?' My Lili, will you answer me a question? Perhaps it will be easy for you to answer that which is and has been an enigma to millions:

What is it to be a Christian?

A pause ensued; Lili remained standing

in thought. At last she raised her head and said:

"Dear Otto, what else should to be a Christian mean, than to have Christ abiding in one's heart?"

It pierced me to the heart. How often had I felt that I had a Devil within me, or at least a demon!

"Yes, thus it is; and in none other way. So simple, and yet so grand!" continued Lili, in a quiet transport: "He is my aim; out of Him I cannot speak of myself. He is my being, from Him I think, feel, and act. He is my life, in Him I move, live, and have my being."

And she added, in a low tone, "Oh, Thou my Saviour, grant that I may ever know Thee thus to my life's end!"

We walked on farther in silence. I felt myself inwardly bowed down, and yet at the same time exalted, by the side of this child. In form she was a woman, full-grown, lovely, enchantingly graceful. But in thoughts, aspiration, and in sympathy, she was still the gentle, innocent child. And strange! sensual as I was, much as I regarded her loveliness, it was still chiefly the child in her that made me a prisoner and governed me.

My own childish reminiscences streamed in upon me; my heart became full, so unutter-

ably full. The tears were nigh welling up into my eyes. One thought at last prevailed —"She is the angel that shall lead you back to God!"

"But," interrupted Lili, after a long silence, "it is peculiarly something which can alone be felt, and not expressed. Do not you think so too, Otto?"

I had great difficulty in answering. What I did say I do not know.

Her arm trembled in mine; by a sudden impulse we stood still beneath a little image of the Virgin, faintly illumined by the lamp above.

"I must look you in the face," she said, "it was exactly as if a stranger had spoken to me. No, it is you still; you are the same as ever!"

And she laughed at herself, and at her silly fears, as she called them.

Her laughter, which always sounded like music in my ear, broke the enchantment between us. Her glance, and the brilliancy of her countenance, went to my soul.

"And you are too the same as ever," I exclaimed, as I drew her close to me; "my own, my only Lili; in life and in death, my own sweet, good little friend!"

I have met her again; yes, I have met Anna! She was sitting by herself, engaged in a strange occupation. She was picking the

reeds, and the shells, and other small particles, out of her dress, and from her long, luxuriant hair. Her light garment had slipped down over her shoulder. Oh, horror! I was near enough to see a brand mark on the white shoulder. It was red as blood, and like a guilty deed it reverted on my soul.

I could, as it were, read her heart. Shame, remorse, and despair, harboured there. But there was naught of her life's history to be read in her heart; that was written in her degraded, but once so beauteous, features; and the brand on her shoulder ended the history. From the first, she had been guilty of none other crime than of a warm, earnest affectionateness. In return for this, I had thrust her down to destruction, without bestowing another thought upon her. She had sunk down from misery to misery, from crime to crime, till she had found a death of despair beneath the waters. Oh! how my heart burned and glowed.

I regarded her a long while in peace; I could not get rid of that glance from her eyes! I felt as if I were laid out on the rack; aye, worse, as if I were stretched on the stake and wheel. But all at once a shudder ran through me; I became as hot as a firebrand, and as cold as a lump of ice. A terrible idea had seized

me. Who did these features remind me of? There was no longer room for doubt. Was it not a striking likeness? Martin was as like Anna as a son can be to his mother! And if any confirmation were needed, had not Martin's mother belonged to a wretched circus troupe, and had they not found her body in the pool? And Martin's secret, that great secret, that was to clear everything up between us! Oh! how could I doubt any longer?

Martin, then, was my and her son!

I had not only proved her ruin, but that of my own child as well. Now it was plain why I had felt myself so inexplicably attracted towards the boy; why I had believed that I found myself over again in him; why I had loved him spite of all his depraved and defiant manner.

His depravity! Let me be just. It was nothing but my own depravity; he learned everything of me. Certainly, there was an unfortunate, if not an evil nature in him; but this, too, was mine. God had punished me in him.

Is it not said that "God visits the sins of the parents upon the children to the third and fourth generation?"

It is horrible! But the most horrible of all is this—not the mother only, but the child, too, my own child!

There is no such thing as sanity here in Hell, consequently there can be no insanity; or else I had gone mad in that terrible hour.

I must ascertain the truth, cost what it might. I started forward in the foolish hope of being able to surprise her, and of getting my question answered before she could escape me; but at my first movement she was startled, and noticed me: with the speed of terror she rushed away, and soon vanished from my sight among a crowd of shades she met on the road.

Confounded, in despair, and suffering the severest agony, I returned on my steps:

"Whither shall I go, where shall I hide myself," I muttered to myself in wailing accents? But in Hell there is no hiding-place, neither from man nor from God; there is no corner where one can fight out the struggle in solitude, and give way to one's grief unheeded.

I do not think I have ever yet succeeded in getting any single letter written off at one time. The paper lies before me, I write a little about what especially occupies my thoughts, and then lay it aside till another opportunity occurs, which often is long in coming. I am naturally referring to an inward opportunity. If I did not seize the occa-

sion as it were by force, I should never have a quiet moment here for writing; and so, although I call these communications letters, the greatest part of them are in fact only notes.

I was at my country seat. One morning, the gardener came to speak with me respecting some alterations to be made in the garden. I was not in the best humour possible; rather out of temper in fact, that lovely morning; and so when the man, who I thought had got ample instructions, came out rather reluctantly with the question:

"And the tree, your honour? Do you intend that that pretty tree is to be cut down?"

"Yes, certainly," I answered shortly.

The conversation referred to a large beech tree, which stood in the corner of an inclosed field, belonging to me. How ever it had come to stand there all by itself, no one was able to explain. But it certainly was one of the most lovely trees of the sort one could well wish to see. It spread out its branches on all sides in regular form, and the foliage, which was most luxuriant, hung down gracefully. But it obstructed the view, and sentence, therefore, was pronounced against it—to cut it down, and chop it up into faggots!

"Yes, certainly," I answered.

But the man remained standing; he evidently had something still on his mind. After a little hesitation he continued, in a half-disheartened, half-bold manner:

"But old Severin will take it so to heart if this tree is felled. He is so fond of it."

"Who is old Severin?"

"He is a very old man, and lives in the house close against it. He must be near upon a hundred, I think. He keeps his bed nearly the whole year round. But in summer time, when it is a nice warm day, he manages to get up, and then some one leads him underneath the tree. I have seen him there every summer as long as I can remember. People call it old Severin's tree, and would take it very hard, I am sure, if it were to be felled."

Unfortunately there was something in the man's voice and manner that did not please me; something that sounded like a threat, and injured his cause. I had not the honour of old Severin's acquaintance, and did not care to form it in this way. However, the tree would doubtless have been spared had not the fellow added just at the critical moment:

"Then does not your honour think that we may leave the tree standing?"

There was something very irritating in this

remark, especially in the word "we." I had no idea of being coupled in the plural number with this fellow off the dung-heap.

"No matter who the tree is called after, it is my property, and shall be cut down. Let me hear no more talk about it."

And the tree was felled, and I got the view, but it did not realize my expectations. The house ought to have come down too, but that did really belong to old Severin.

Towards summer old Severin died suddenly. One day they found him in a well of water outside the house. His attendant had scarcely left him an hour, and during this time the accident had occurred. Yes, accident!

Thereon the jury gave their verdict, "Inadvertently drowned." The man was ninety-three years old, and quite childish; so of course any idea of suicide was out of the question.

But the common people thought differently. All kinds of reports got whispered abroad, which made it appear very probable, and were by no means pleasant to hear. They had carefully kept it a secret from the old man that his tree had been cut down, and had tried to persuade him to keep in bed. Somehow or other, however, he got to hear of it; and from that day never expressed any wish to get up

or to go out into the air. But, besides this, a great change had taken place in him. He became peevish, reserved, and silent. Evidently there was something running in his head, and he was tired and weary of everything. What it was that engrossed his thoughts was discovered when they found him that day drowned in the water.

The occurrence produced a very uncomfortable impression upon me. I was very sorry about it; and, if I were to speak the truth, I was not quite free from remorse. But as for the story connected with the sad event I discarded it altogether as a piece of scandalous gossip. There was no sense in it, that a man of ninety-three years, who suffered neither from want nor pain, could not have abided his time, but should put an end to his days.

And yet—oh, how terribly clear it all is now—yet such was actually the case!

Old Severin had actually committed suicide out of despair about the tree, which no longer existed. The axe that had felled it had struck the old man to the heart. Certainly, he was childish; it was half insanity when he threw himself into the well. But still his mind was firmly and indelibly impressed with one idea, that there was no pleasure any longer for him in life, nothing in the world worth living for.

His wife was dead; all his friends were gone; and those of his children that were alive were far off. He lived among an entirely new and strange generation. There was nothing left to him saving that old tree. It is true it was much younger than he was; he was already getting an old man when it became a favourite and well-known tree, renowned for its refreshing shade. But they had lived together a long and happy time; it could never be forgotten. And still, though so rich in old associations, it was at its prime and full vigour. It was the old man's summer joy; beneath its cool shade he had often refreshed himself in the hot sultry days. The tree existed no more. Henceforth life was winter to him. He would not, he could not live any tonger.

It is a true history!

Certainly, I did not know all this when I had the tree cut down; but at all events I knew enough to have let it remain standing. My quick, hasty temper had carried me away in an unhappy moment.

It was dear firewood that I burnt in my stove that winter. Even now it makes Hell hot for me. But old Severin sits as of yore in the cool shade.

Has not the thought struck you that here is

a new edition of the history of the rich and the poor man?

"Now he is comforted, but thou art tormented!"

Oh, would it only were a history, to remind, to warn! Foolish wish! It is the most complete reality.

But if you think this is all, you are very much mistaken. In my day I have felled many and many a tree besides this beech. Not from malice (the world was right when it called me a good-hearted fellow), but from sheer obstinacy, wantonness, and levity. When anything came in my way, of course it had to be removed at once, and I went on in my path without bestowing a farther thought on it.

In this respect I am a type of the human race in general. How much harm men commit; how many sorrows and pains they cause each other, without really meaning anything wrong, by a thoughtless and heedless behaviour!

Very likely you have often seen a conceited coxcomb saunter along the road, and with his light cane cut the heads off the flowers that happened to catch his eye. He does not do it, it must be allowed, from any bad feeling; in fact he neither thinks nor feels anything at all about it. But these poor flowers, that thus stand in his way, enjoy the

life that has been vouchsafed them too, and cause pleasure to numberless persons along that same road.

You do not take it amiss of me? You are free to say that I am such a coxcomb. I have certainly been one. But after this concession I may be at the liberty of declaring that the world is full of such thoughtless, selfish coxcombs, of both sexes. They set a great estimation on pleasure certainly, that is to say, on their own pleasure; but they treat the pleasure of other people in the most heedless, giddy way. Would you like to know, in one word, wherein the fault, the great fault lies? It lies, then, in the want of self-denial. This virtue, the groundwork of all the other virtues, only One can teach the souls of men, namely, He who denied Himself unto death upon the cross.

But the great mass will never learn self-denial. Woe to him who does not separate himself from the great mass! He makes the trees and the flowers droop wheresoever he comes, and thinks nothing of it; but some day it will all come back to his memory, with terrible accusations, with burning remorse and torment. These are but small items in the register of sin, it is true; but, unless a saving hand interposes, these small things will be his

destruction, even though he be not conscious of having committed any sin.

Oh, my friend, take heed whilst it is day! The night cometh!

My mother certainly was a remarkable woman; or rather, I may say, a very remarkable woman. I do not believe she ever gave me a cross word. But she had a cold manner about her in gaining her point; and, in most respects, she did with me exactly as she pleased. This balancing of disposition, this imperturbable *sang-froid*, I did not inherit from her.

I do not believe that in her whole life she ever drew the shortest straw. She never committed herself; she was always right, always stood with the palm of victory in her hand. There was a degree of irresistible logic, less in her words than in her person and deportment, which reflected what was right and becoming in every direction. Conscious herself of the universal estimation in which her perfections were regarded, they fell with a crushing weight on every one who ventured to oppose her. And this was more evident in her relations with my father; I might say my poor father. Sometimes he certainly did get his own way, but, as long as he lived, he never was once allowed to be in the right.

As for my aunt, it was but natural that my

mother felt a sort of compassion for her. It would have been difficult to have found a more decided counterpart to my mother. But this compassion was never accompanied by any treatment at all derogatory; so that as regards her my mother was blameless, and had nothing to reproach herself with. In fine, if my mother was not what may be called kind, she was never unkind to any one.

People in general were of opinion that there was some secret or other which was the cause of the peculiar relations existing between my parents. I do not think there was any. But they had certainly been egregiously mistaken in each other. They were two irreconcileable quantities, that, if they must live together, could not get on in any other way than they did.

On Sundays I used to have to dine with my mother, a compulsory duty that was very disagreeable to me. But still worse was it when every now and then I had to accompany her to church. It cost me a great effort. Not that I had anything against God's word; but a restlessness came over me that was extremely painful, and so many things were ripped up that I would much rather had remained buried for ever. In my every-day life it

was not difficult to keep serious thoughts away; but on these particular Sundays it was impossible. Something that lay hid in the deepest corners of my soul powerfully asserted its sway in connection with all kinds of affecting reminiscences. I felt that I was not what I ought to have been. But now, yes, now unfortunately it could not be different.

But the worst of all was that I could not refuse occasionally to accompany my mother to the altar. She used to go regularly twice a year, in the spring and autumn. It was just as if I was going to my death; but I could not, I would not offend or vex her. So I went with her, but with great aversion and horror; for I was no atheist, neither was I careless to that degree that I was above such a thing. I felt at bottom that I ought not to participate in that holy rite without bringing my heart with me. Whatever might be laid to my charge, at all events I was no hypocrite. I was honest and candid even in my greatest dissipations. Yet, I must not say too much.

But my mother would take me with her with an iron hand. Pale and exhausted I walked along by her side. She thought, perhaps, that it was from pious emotion; not so, it was from other, but as deep causes.

The confession caused me insufferable pain.

I tried all in my power not to follow the words; but, on these occasions, the spirit was stronger than the flesh, and I comprehended their meaning but too well. I had to turn the host over and over again in my mouth; my tongue appeared to grow thicker and thicker. Involuntarily I thought, "Will you succeed in getting it down?" Truly it was anguish to heart and soul. If I was pale before, now I turned red. I managed easier with the wine; it was liquid at all events, but it was just as if it burnt my inside. In general it took me a long time to recover the effects of these days. I was obliged to throw myself into a whirl of dissipation and gaiety to stupefy myself, to put myself to rights, as I called it.

So it was then. But now, my friend, now I feel that even if it had been to save my mother's life, I would not have gone to the altar. I lost more, oh, a thousand times more, by those communions than she gained by them.

One of these sorrowful communions returns with especial force to my mind. And when I ask myself, "Why this one in particular?" there stands a graceful girlish form before me, in the first bloom of youth, I may say, of a spiritual loveliness that is inwardly moving.

She is standing with her head slightly

bent forwards, her dark glossy hair falls down over her neck, breast, and shoulders, in luxuriant masses. Her features, which are small, and of a delicate mould, have about them a charm of a higher nature than appears even in her perfect figure. When she raises her dark glance, it is her eye alone that attracts the attention; in that deep and thoughtful gaze the whole of her being streams forth. Nay, not quite the whole, for a smile belongs to that glance, a smile of passing sweetness, which it is so easy to evoke in her. But whether she smiles with her eye or lip, one cannot say, it is like a light from above, that falls down upon and illuminates her features.

You have here a faint picture of Lili in her sixteenth year. She, too, was going to the table, and she, too, seemed uneasy in her mind, inwardly moved. She is paler than usual, and her bosom is heaving from her irregular breathing, sometimes so deep, so infinitely deep. Yes! she, too, is restless, and moved, but in a manner, and from causes, as widely different from those which agitate me as heaven is from earth.

I had arisen early. I placed a great value on my morning dreams, but to-day they had fled away from me. A cold, severe reality had at once appeared before me. Uneasily

I went from one thing to another, without their being able to engross my attention even for a moment. My disquiet increased; with all my power of will I could not prevent my heart from throbbing. When I looked in the glass, I had to turn hastily away. What criminal was it that was staring at me? For, in truth, there was not only something strange, but at the same time something terrible, in those pale features which I called mine.

At last the hour was at hand. I got ready and went in to my mother. I met Lili alone in the parlour. She, too, seemed agitated.

"Are you not well, Lili? You look pale," I said, as I took hold of her extended hand.

She smiled. Oh, that smile was my heaven! Yet, woe is me that I had none other! Now, I have not even that! And she left the room to tell my mother that I had come.

I fell into a reverie. The emotion which she had plainly evinced took possession of my heart. There was nothing that presented greater attractions to me than to solve the enigma of her nature. And, at this moment, it was a fortunate diversion to see into her heart instead of into my own.

My eyes fell upon a little book she had just been reading. Here, then, was the solution of

the riddle. It was a Companion to the Altar. I read where the book was open.

"In the Lord's supper, the Saviour enters into a communion with the believing soul, so inward and full, that no tongue can describe it. The type of this blessed union is the relationship between the bridegroom and his bride. It is far from being merely a comparison. Jesus is the true bridegroom, and the pious soul the bride. In infinite love, unspeakably deep and sweet, they devote themselves to each other, and find the fulness of blessedness in a complete, eternal union."

Now I understood, or at least got an idea, of what was passing in Lili's mind; what it was that moved her so inwardly.

Her soul was agitated like a bride's when the moment was approaching, when she shall give herself up, and belong to her chosen bridegroom. Never before has she experienced so sweet a feeling; never before has she felt so happy, and yet her soul is filled with tremulous emotions. She longs, she earnestly craves, to give herself up to him, and feels tempted as it were to fly. She blushes, she turns pale, a prey to shame and fear, though she feels well assured, that when she rests in her husband's arms, there will never more be cause to fear.

CHAPTER XX.

THE other day I found one of my friends, a distinguished Danish artist, sitting in a great state of grief, with his hand under his chin. He had a paper in his hand.

He was what the world would call a truly good and amiable individual. Why, then, had he come to Hell?

He had been an idolater to his profession. He loved it so passionately, that in it he had forgotten his God, righteousness, judgment, and life eternal. He was a noble-hearted soul after his way, as the manner in which he passed out of the world evinces. His country, entangled in a web of falsehood, treachery, and violence, had been compelled to take up arms against an audacious enemy of superior strength. Boldly the little nation rose up to guard all that was precious to it, its fatherland, its native tongue, the beloved memories of a thousand years; aye, it was a battle for existence itself.

But bravery cannot work miracles now-a-

days. Betrayed, deserted on all sides, though the whole world felt itself moved at such shameless, such cowardly violence, the little nation had to succumb.

In admiration with its exploits, the enemy overflowed the land in the arrogance of victorious joy. My friend, the sculptor, was one of the many who had vainly sacrificed their lives in a righteous and holy cause. At the first summons, he had thrown aside the chisel to seize the rifle, and had met his death, without having realized the value of life.

"What have you got there? Why are you so sad?" I inquired.

"I mourn over my poor, unhappy country, that lies bleeding ignominiously in the dust under the feet of the enemy. I am afraid that my country was not worthy of the life I sacrificed for it. We were, indeed, grievously mistaken, not only in the righteousness and compassionateness of the world, but in ourselves too. We were by no means the powerful, valiant people we had imagined ourselves to be; a people who, nursed up by the achievement of great and noble deeds, placed their fatherland before aught else. I bitterly repent ever having thrown away my young life in this manner. It was a mere illusion, a dream from which I have been fearfully awakened."

"Do not let yourself be carried too far, my friend, you only add to your misery," I remonstrated, interrupting him. "The Danes are certainly known to be a brave, valiant people."

"Yes, the Danish soldier is not to blame. He is brave and staunch; as hard as iron and as firm as granite. Though taken away from the plough, badly disciplined, badly equipped and commanded, and in want of competent officers, he performed his duty to the utmost. But never have good qualities like these been worse appreciated or worse utilized; never has a good soldier been worse led, than was the case in this unhappy war. A false spirit pervaded the whole affair; beginning from above, it constantly extended itself downwards. For a length of time it was unintelligible how so much bravery in warriors, such great sacrifices on the part of the people, should be fruitless. But it is all clear now. There was a mighty influence that made itself secretly felt, to which everything else had to give way. Not only before us, but in our very midst, we had a German element of superior power. This foreign element had crept in unnoticed in the lapse of time, and had hatched its brood in our nest, to appear at some time or other under adverse circumstances.

Now it boldly raises its head, encouraged by the mishaps of our fatherland, and drags the confiding, disheartened people along with it, aye, and patriotic hearts too, by thousands. This is the source of all my country's woe. Denmark was mentally vanquished long before she had physically to succumb."

"Truly a very sad history!" I said, sympathizing with him.

"Yes, very sorrowful indeed, and widely extended as it is, it may be comprehended in a few words:

"'The little Danish nation rose up like a lion, but fell down like a sheep, aye, as the very silliest sheep.' When the war was over, the opinion began to gain ground that, had the enemy's demands been granted, all these misfortunes would have been avoided. Honour, liberty, national existence, were not included in the question. An effeminate feeling of despair, and a womanly view of the case, kept gaining ground. Indeed, they were not far from swearing that the wolf had done no wrong at all, but that all the blame was on the sheep's side.

"A genuine, narrow-minded egotism, which has an eye only to its own petty affairs, raised up its voice in loud tones, and cried woe over all those who had thought to venture something

for the sake of country, people, and liberty. These loathsome voices, never heard before, reached even to the very throne.

"See here!" he continued, handing me the paper, "here we have, by way of confirmation, an address with numerous signatures affixed."

I read it. Yes, in truth, it was enough to be sick over. Piteous lamentations over contributions, compulsory driving, billeting, tyrannical oppression! No thought about fatherland, or the common weal. Wild howls against the government that had waged the war for honour, independence, existence, this glorious contest for everything holy and precious. Piteous cries to Majesty, that it should counsel with other advisers and procure peace —peace at any price! Whether the country were dismembered, whether hundreds of thousands of brothers and sisters were given over into the power of the enemy, was a matter of no consideration so long as N. N. could only get to farm his land in peace, or O. O. to carry on his chandlery business; or P. P. to live from his rents, or his insignificant post. Peace, peace! Danish or German; quite indifferent, if peace could only be had!

What could I say? In itself it was entirely devoid of any comfort, and in Hell there is nothing that resembles comfort in the smallest

degree. But in this instance consolation was given, and appeared of itself. As I was thoughtlessly turning the paper over, I saw that there was some reading on the other side. It was a poem, a very beautiful one, the expression of a powerful mind; of one who loved his country best in her misfortunes, and allowed hope to live on.

I was startled. How had these pretty verses come to Hell? Only one explanation was possible. The dedication was published together with the poem; they were in the same relation to each other as are the face and reverse side of a coin. The dedication, then, in accordance with some law of mind unknown to us, had taken the poem with it to Hell, to appear in all its full pitifulness from the contrast.

I read it aloud to him; he was enchanted with it.

"You see now," I said, "that you were unjust in your complaints. 'There are broken vessels* in all countries.' You have still a people whom you may venture to acknowledge. The refuse always floats on the surface, and always seems to be more than it really is.

* From a poem by Vessel, in which he reproves people who come home from abroad, finding everything perfect there and everything faulty at home.'

In tranquil and in happy times it keeps nicely to the bottom; it does not matter a doit. But when an opportunity presents itself it is skimmed off, and thereby the matter is cleared. In plain words, where poems like this are to be found, neither honour nor life are in danger."

He seemed convinced and soothed; and now we regaled ourselves as well as we could over this shabby dedication. One of my friends set it to music, and it had a wonderfully comic effect as a song. It soon got widely circulated in our circle, and made a brilliant success.

For it is the order of the day here in Hell, that whenever anything extremely contemptible or wretched comes down from the world above, for our composers to set it to music, when it becomes a popular, or rather a street song. But our songs do not consist of this sort alone. We have a superfluity of lewd songs, which come down to us all ready set to music. But it is naturally only the riff-raff of Hell that find any pleasure in them, I had nearly said; but I mean that scream themselves hoarse in singing them.

Something of a similar nature occurs to me. The other day, in rummaging in the pocket of my coat, I found a large bundle of paper

wrapped up in it. It was an old *Landdag's* * newspaper. I had probably stuck it in my pocket as waste paper, and its spectre had thus followed me down to Hell.

This paper contained a portion of the notorious transactions which had been discussed by the *Landdag* for reforming the church in our country. Truly the *Landdag* had set itself an agreeable task. A corporation, composed exclusively for a secular object, and of members professing all kinds of religion, with and without any faith, had undertaken to introduce order into God's kingdom on earth, the Christian Church, a society of a purely spiritual nature! Among the speakers there were three especially that distinguished themselves.

One was a retired director of a fire brigade. The fire-bell was continually tolling in his ears, and he discharged streams of water in lofty jets. The other was a weaver from the country. He found his loom wherever he came, and anything whatsoever he got permission to mix himself up in, he brought to his loom. So matters went on till the thread broke; but no one had ever seen any result to his labours. The third was a mouldy literate, who did not acknowledge any religion

* The *Landdag* is the diet of legislative estates in Denmark.

at all. You must certainly remember him? He it was who, though, as I said, devoid of any religion at all, had undertaken to notice all theological and other works of an edifying nature in the evening paper. Theology was his favourite study now, and truly a very ludicrous one it was.

I cannot tell you how much I—I must use the expression—enjoyed going over these lectures once more, internally so different, and yet of the same extraordinary effect. It is impossible to decide whether it is stupidity that has taken impudence in tow, or whether the reverse is the case. They are all essentially comical; we should laugh if we could.

I believe the literate is the master of all the others; he is in the literal sense of the word a deep fellow, who can contain all the rest put together. He knows to a turn how it should be. After having overhauled the clergy, without allowing them a ha'porth of credit, he attacks the church briskly, and disposes of it in the snap of a finger. This may do all very well for Hell. But it is almost incredible that such a thing can succeed in the world in any assembly of the picked men of the country. Still, it shows how the world really is constituted.

There is no doubt but that these transactions

are to be found among our archives, and that they created no little sensation in their time. But no one remembered them longer. Here, just as in the world, one thing quickly supersedes another. A lucky accident had now placed them privately in my hands.

I was just on the point of going to a large party of good friends and acquaintances, where I delivered the select speeches of those chosen persons, to the great amusement of the company. Some composers who were present undertook to treat them melodramatically. As yet, however, nothing has been done, but the speeches are already widely circulated.

But I must return to that very recent tale of robbery which so strikingly exemplifies the moral position of Europe in the nineteenth century. It appears to have given rise to a regular assortment of street ballad literature in a small way. Allow me to quote some of the first that come to hand of these merry new songs and histories.

Yet, when it comes to the point, it appears that I have promised more than I can well fulfil. One must be particular, even here, and know how to master, or, at all events, to restrain oneself.

There are, first, some proclamations couched in a lofty and bombastic style from powerful

belligerent princes. Oh glorious army! how ever could you forget your *prestige?* If you wished to fight, why not have picked out a foe more worthy of you? "*Famose thaten!*" (The enemy, the least and weakest they have been able to find, had, for instance, been obliged to give way at all points.) The mentally-intoxicated mighty fatherland re-echoes with shouts of joy. But all the rest of the sober world knows not whether to laugh or to cry. A thick scratch over them!

Next, there are some astounding *political conjuring tricks* in a true moral German spirit.

Hocus pocus, backwards and forwards! White becomes black, and is changed to white again, according to circumstances! The whole art depends on the talent of the performer. Meanwhile, the entrance-money is paid, and those who will not applaud must at least swallow their vexation. The next great exhibition will take place when the political horizon is too thick.

A thick mark over these, too!

The next thing to cite:

—— "*Une grande misère.*" There are three, and all of them are made fools of. As they have sown so do they reap.

In piteous chorus they sing together:

"*Schleswig-Holstein ganz verschlungen.*" One

of them, however, has a little consolation, for he gets the money in his pocket. But the others? They get only derision and ineffaceable shame.

All at once a thundering word of command: "*Halt! Schön-aufgesehen!*" The song ceases, and they stand all in a line. A stout corporal's cane whizzes about their ears.

That was the end of "*die glorreiche Erhebung.*"

—— *A pastoral letter* composed of the most pious, the sweetest and most venerable expressions, in which a hundred thousand souls, that have been sundered from their people and their fatherland by the violence of the enemy, to sink into a foreign and detested nationality, are ordered to thank Almighty God for their happy deliverance on the occasion of a general and solemn festival of the Church.

(Humbug, blasphemy; very smart!)

—— From another quarter some *extra ministerial speeches*, which begin by making a great and powerful nation believe, that though they have permitted solemn and sacred engagements to fall to the ground; though they have betrayed their poor, sorely distressed friend, under pretence of making his cause their own; though they have essentially prostituted themselves by threatening, while

all the time they dared not strike a blow; though they have submitted to blow after blow in the face, and to a degree of scorn that is perfectly revolting, yet for all that that they can stand with palms in their hands, and think that their influence in the council of the nations is greater than ever.

This must suffice!

The melodies are first-rate. The accompaniment of a hand organ "obligato," produces an excellent effect. But such we have to hear; it cannot be described.

Have you heard speak of the gardens of Jericho? If not, at least you have heard of the lilies of the field, that neither toil nor spin, and yet are arrayed more gloriously than Solomon in all his magnificence.

Well, I and Lili have once seen these lilies growing in the valley of Jericho. But Lili was a lily herself, more lovely than all the others. She told me the following legend on that spot one evening. I can still hear the soft melodious voice in which she used to tell her tales, as if they were secrets.

Wherever she got these tales from I never could make out. I have often been inclined to think it was from inspiration. But enough to say that I listened to them with a kind of

devotion, and believed in them—I had nearly said as if they were gospel.

"A man was lying at the point of death. The world was vanishing away from him like a vapour. At last the great question occurred to him, 'Whither will you go when you have departed hence?' And with this a restless agitation and anxiety seized him.

"He was at the point of death; in its last great agonies. But around his bed stood ten terrible forms; stiff, cold, implacable. They were the ten commandments of God. And they lifted up their voices against him, one after the other, and vehemently accused him. The first said, 'Unhappy man, how many gods have you not worshipped in the world, and in your sinful heart?' Another, 'How often and in how many ways have you not taken God's name in vain?' A third, 'How often have you not broken the day of rest for yourself and others?' A fourth, 'How often have you not defied God in those things in which you owed obedience and reverence?' A fifth, 'How often have you not offended your brother, and trodden compassion under foot?' And so on, one after the other. All the ten with one voice cried, 'Woe over him!'

"But the dying man writhed in agony on his bed, and could give them no answer. He

must have felt that he was utterly lost. At last he stammered out in despair,

"'Will nothing induce you to leave my bed, ye fearful accusers, that I may die in peace?'

"And they answered, 'Only on one condition will we go. When we ten have left, One will come in our place, and to Him you must unconditionally, with heart and soul, belong for all eternity. Do you agree to this?'

"The wretched man pondered. It seemed to him terrible; his heart throbbed as if at its last beat. At length he answered,

"'Well, go then, and let the One come! I would rather have to do with one than with ten!'

"Scarcely had he uttered these words than the dark accusers vanished, and in their place stood a radiant form, noble and gentle, the express image of Mercy. The wretched man fixed his glazed eyes on the form. Though dying he felt a new life within him. Suddenly his baptism and the long-forgotten lessons of childhood came into his thoughts, which his pious mother had taught him when he was a little child; he thought about God, who is Love, and about sinners who could be saved. In an instant it all seemed so plain and so real, as if it had never been out of his thoughts. And he knew who the form was!

"Then a hallowed smile lightened up his

face; involuntarily he stretched out his arms, and cried with a last effort,

"'Yes, I will belong to Thee, body and soul, to all eternity! Lord have mercy on me —receive my spirit!'

"And his spirit fled. He had departed in peace!"

There was something of the bat nature about Aunt Betty. She seldom went out in the daytime; in the evening, however, under cover of the darkness, she would make frequent excursions into the town, accompanied generally by a maid-servant. For these excursions, which in a certain degree were of a secret character, she kept an especial dress—disguise one might well call it. I can see her before me in her old hood, which was of some soft material, devoid of shape, and almost lapped over her face, and made her features unrecognisable; her old woollen shawl with a long fringe, her thick leather boots, and a large unfathomable bag on her arm.

In this attire, beneath which it would not have been readily supposed was the sister of the rich and respected manufacturer, she used to set off with her maid on her evening adventures, like the Caliph Haroun and his trusty Giafour in the "Thousand and One Nights." What her purpose was on these excursions

could not long remain a secret to me. It was to seek out the suffering in their own homes, in order to acquaint herself with their poverty, their respectability, and to ascertain the best way in which to relieve them.

But these visits by no means always had a satisfactory result. Certainly, it was far from her thoughts to search for adventures; but somehow or other they came to her; many a strange adventure she met with on these evening excursions.

Sometimes she would return home jaded and fagged, and sometimes quite put out. On such occasions she had lost all faith in human nature. But she did not remain long in this misanthropical vein. As soon as ever she heard of the misfortunes or sufferings of some other family, she was the same good-natured, compassionate soul as ever. She used to be especially moved by the piteous appeals in the newspapers to charitable persons. She could never withstand one of these. Her imaginative powers, equally excitable as her feelings, set themselves at once to work, and soon conjured up a fullness of misery, which was far in advance of what the advertisement revealed. And thereupon out she would set again on her evening excursions.

When I grew older I was sometimes permitted to accompany her instead of the ser-

vant. I remember very well one winter evening; it was rather late before we set out. It was to inquire into an advertisement which in strong terms depicted some widow's poverty, who had seen better days. It was always a difficult matter to hunt out the exact spot where the sufferer was to be found. Generally it was in some of the remote and almost unknown streets, where the poorer population of the city was crowded thickly together. Filth, prostitution, and fighting here belonged to the general order of the day. It certainly required a warm, to say nothing of a courageous, heart for a woman to venture among such scenes. But it was still more difficult to find the way in these houses, four to six stories high, where twenty or thirty wretched families lived, or those dark fetid staircases and passages; and then to hit on the one required of all these dens of misery.

This evening we had been very unsuccessful, and were very nearly giving it up. First we went into the wrong house. We clambered upstairs and downstairs, and were obliged to pass through a regular purgatory before we discovered our mistake and had got out. At last, however, we found the right house, and recommenced knocking at the doors to make inquiries. Fresh instances of

ill-will, incivility, coarse and loose jests, met us. But the direction was certainly right; and by following it we at last reached the garret. Here we paused for breath a moment, and to listen. A confused noise sounded from within, accompanied with loud laughter, talking, and the rattling of glass. Perhaps we had gone wrong again. "The despairing widow, and her children, sinking under the deepest destitution," could not possibly live here! We groped our way a little on one side, to come away from the noise and merriment, when we were so fortunate as to find a door. We knocked, but no one heard us. But the next instant a door opposite was opened, through which the noise issued, and out stepped a dashing matron with a candle in her hand, of plump form, and with ruddy cheeks and sparkling eyes, a modern Bacchanalian, of between thirty and forty years. Her wide cap ribbon was streaming behind her; the collar round her neck was unloosened, and hung down on one side. On one foot she had a slipper, and on the other nothing but a stocking.

My aunt asked in great confusion for Widow N. N.

"It is I," answered the woman, in a very free and easy manner. "Have the goodness

to come in." And she made as if she would conduct us to the other side of the passage.

But my aunt thereupon plucked up her courage, and all her composure returned.

"Is it you?" she said. "No; then with your permission we will go in here. Your good friends there may like to hear what I have to say to you."

And she pushed open the door of the room where the party were assembled. A deep silence reigned. At a sign from her the woman went in first; and I followed close behind, and remained standing at the entrance. It was a very mirthful, but comical, scene that presented itself to us. The company, and especially the hostess, was not deficient in impudence; though for a few moments they were somewhat dumbfoundered. Madame had not expected so late a visit; everything was in disorder. And there stood my aunt in the door, a mystic form, furnished with a power and authority by no means peculiar to her. As soon as the mingled odours of beefsteak, tobacco, brandy, and punch that assailed us, allowed her to get her breath, she began to read the honourable company as emphatic a lesson as could be wished. I had never thought my dear good aunt could be so sharp. And as soon as she had had her say, she took

me by the hand, and stumped down-stairs again.

How indignant she was! Such an abuse of people's Christian charity she had never dreamed of! But the case was not without a degree of satisfaction. Her vexation was intermingled with a feeling of inward pride that she had been able to tell the shameless pack the truth to their faces, without any of them having dared to raise a voice against her.

But before we had traversed many streets her blood had cooled down considerably, and a reaction taken place in her good-tempered, easy disposition. In quite a different tone she began by saying:

"Perhaps I ought not to have spoken so sharply to them. Certainly it was a disgraceful imposture, and there can be no excuse for it. But with regard to the banquet which we came bouncing into, there are some extenuating circumstances. Poor people will live well when they can, and we must not judge them too severely in that respect. They do not have many pleasures; they have to put up with and do without so much; so that it is but natural that every now and then they should like to know what it is to live and to enjoy themselves. So they take things easy,

and turn reason out of doors in order to make merry. For many days they have too little; but on some day, or at least for some hours, they have a superfluity. Then, childlike, they give themselves up to enjoyment. On consideration, I really think I was too hard upon them!"

My aunt was the uncontrolled mistress of the household, and my father was by no means stingy towards her. There were quite as many out of the house as there were in it who received their food from her hand. There were more knocks at the back door than there were at the front, though my mother did not receive so few visitors. It was especially towards dark that aunt gave an audience, when jar after jar knocked at the door. To me naturally it was only the jars; the unknown and nameless persons were no matter to me. But my aunt knew them all perfectly, and many a good word of advice and many a warning she gave them into the bargain.

I remember so perfectly another evening excursion, which did not pass off without an adventure. My aunt was going after an advertisement again. This time we found the place without much difficulty, and met the woman, "the poor woman," at home. As soon as she saw us she burst into tears. My

aunt seated herself by her and sympathised with her, and allowed her to pour forth all her troubles into her bosom; and this she did effectually, between her convulsive sobs. The poor woman's misfortune consisted especially in having a bad husband, who squandered everything away, and treated her badly. With a degree of truthful eloquence she gave a sketch of her necessities, and dwelt especially on the ill-treatment she received. My aunt quite shuddered at the recital, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Poor, poor woman!" she exclaimed every moment, and at every such outburst the woman received an additional impetus in portraying her sufferings. But I thought to myself if the man was bad, the woman could not be much better in making out her husband to be the greatest brute that ever lived. There was something, too, in these forced outpourings of her heart that seemed very unnatural. She did not touch my heart, at all events!

But the case all at once assumed a form and proportions that were equally surprising to us both. As aunt and the woman were sitting together, in the very middle of it the husband returned home, and walked into the room. The woman stopped short with a sudden jerk in the very middle of an overflow of words,

and quickly wiped away her tears. A strange, oppressive silence ensued. The man kept regarding the scene before him with evident astonishment, and muttered something between his teeth. He was a simple workman, and, in spite of his wife's shocking sketch, appeared to be a very respectable man.

But aunt became inspired. She was so moved at the treatment the poor woman had had to suffer; her heart burned within her, and the hot words streamed from her tongue. She arose from her seat, and gave the man a most severe lecture, couched in a very free-spoken style, as she represented to him his godless, shameful conduct. He listened to her for a moment in utter astonishment, with mouth and eyes wide open, and allowed her to talk away as she pleased. But all of a sudden he interrupted her with a tremendous thump on the table, as he shouted out,

"I tell you it is a hellish lie altogether! Enough of this, madam! Come, pack yourself off this instant!"

But the most remarkable thing of all remains to be told.

The woman, who had been sitting all this while without speaking a word, now jumped up and took her husband's part, and, with her arms akimbo, poured forth a volley of abusive words.

It seemed exactly as if aunt had come with a whole pocketful of lies on purpose to set a husband and wife, who had no cause of complaint against each other, at variance. And she wound up by pointing out where the door was, and by recommending a speedy exit in a way still more unpolite than her husband.

Poor aunt did not lose any time in taking the hint. We tumbled out of the door and down the stairs, and did not come to ourselves again before we had got a good way down the street.

Naturally enough, aunt was very angry, but she was still more confused.

"I cannot make anything out of it, my boy," she said. "My head runs round! Which of the two really was the good-for-nothing, for I am sure it was not myself, though they did try to make out that it was? Was it not the husband, who drank and spent everything, and gave his wife and children the stick instead of bread? But then it is quite inconceivable to me how the woman at last turned against me, when I was defending her against her husband."

"I think, dear aunt, that the woman was the good-for-nothing," I answered. "She tried to wheedle you at the expense of her husband, in order to get you to fork out. But her husband returned, and there she was nicely

caught. Thereupon she resolved to take his part, and joined in in his attack on you; else perhaps the beating she had been talking of might have been in earnest."

"God forgive me!" exclaimed my aunt; "but I think she would have richly deserved it."

As soon as we had got home, and the lamp had been lighted, my aunt took down her old bible, and seated herself on a chair to read before taking her things off. I noticed that her hands shook as she turned the leaves over. The light from the lamp fell directly on her face, as far as the hood permitted it, and I could see that it betokened an unusual degree of excitement, while certain strange contractions about the corners of the mouth showed how moved she was.

She soon found the right place, and began to read aloud:

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink?

"When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee?

"Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?
"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

When she had come to the end, she began again, and in this way read the passage through three times. At first her voice was rather harsh, and inclined to break down, and it required some exertion to get the words out. But by degrees it got its natural sound again, and when she read out the sacred words for the last time, it was soft and mild, and full of touching melody. In the same proportion, too, her features became relaxed, and the old, gentle, good expression returned. No, not quite the old look, it seemed transfigured.

"So," she said at last, as she closed the book, "it has done me good; now, thank God! the knot is untied. For you must know, my dear boy, that there can be knots in the heart, of course in a spiritual sense; and that is one of the very worst, as it is one of the most common ailments in the world. But in God's Word there is a remedy for every disease of the heart."

And the bible reading did me good too; it was impossible but that such words of infinite love should go to my heart. I was still but a child. I had a lively feeling at that hour

that it was God who was speaking, and that He was speaking to me. When my aunt had finished reading, I could say the beautiful words by heart. And so I can still, as you perceive; alas! memory is a part of my torment. I shall hear those words once again, and from the King's own mouth. But then, oh woe, woe is me! I shall stand upon his left hand.

I was at that time still a child, but by no means the good child any longer which my aunt at first made me. A wild carnal nature had already begun to assert its sway over me; the world and its pleasures had begun to dazzle my eyes, and to drag me along with them. But even yet my heart was soft, and easily moved. It never did get really hardened as long as I lived. But it is idle to talk of it. My life has been full of emotions; but they were like the smoke which the next moment is dissolved and vanishes away.

But at that time it was different; God's kingdom had not yet left me far behind. As often as I became moved and touched in spirit, it returned in a streaming flood into my heart, and filled it entirely. So it was that evening. Involuntarily I folded my hands, and my heart said, "Abba, dear Father!"

"It does not trouble me a bit!" continued my aunt, as she took her things off; "for you

see, Otto, I was grievously mistaken in a person I wished to benefit; but I met Him, who from all eternity has been good to me, and my good intentions were not thrown away. He stood, as you have just heard, behind the woman who so shamefully deceived me, and said:

"'Thou blessed of my Father! Thou hast done this unto Me!'

"No, Otto, there is no trace of any knot in my heart. Good-night, my own boy! We will go to bed now."

That evening I did not forget to say my prayers before I fell asleep, neither did I omit them for many succeeding ones.

CHAPTER XXI.

THERE have been moments in my life when I have been, as it were, torn asunder. I will not say they occurred often; and in course of time they became more rare. I have felt not only the deepest dejection, but the most intense anguish of heart; a weight has lain on my soul so heavy that I scarce could draw my breath. It was the vivid feeling of my life's vanity, its worthlessness and sins; it was the keen consciousness that I was going wrong, that I was hastening towards destruction.

"Return!" loud voices sounded all around me. "Oh, return!" And in the depths of my heart the echoes rung—"Yes, return, if it be not too late!"

And it was not too late! No, even the very last time, it would not have been too late. Had this emotion of my soul had its natural course, had this struggle within been fought out to the end, a new and a better creature would have resulted from them. But it never

came to that. Its growth was for the most part broken off. As I used to sit there in deep sorrow and wretchedness, some gay thought or other would come floating into my mind, and snapping the thread of a new life asunder would carry me off with it into fresh whirls of enjoyment, where I quickly forgot myself again.

Yes, I have noticed it in myself and in others, that in some persons' lives it is just as if some malicious, mischievous power were carrying on its game—let me speak out plainly—its uncontrolled game. It never failed to appear, just as they had formed the best resolutions, and felt themselves to be in the best possible state for the reception and influence of what was good; and they would fall again deeper than ever.

Will people then still deny that there is a Devil?

Yes, the Devil—do not let us mince the matter—it is useless to do so—it is of him I am speaking. There is a real Devil, and the number of demons is legion!

But does God then, the mighty, the compassionate God, remain quiet while this foul scene is being enacted in the world, and in the human heart? How can it harmonize with His compassionate and fatherly providence, to

leave men's souls thus in the power of demons, and at such moments as these!

Ah! it is even He who, by His good angels, has awakened this restlessness and pain, this deep emotion in the soul! It is He who has laid this weight upon the heart, and has got it to sigh, to tremble, and to quake. It is He who has brought us to a sorrowful consciousness of ourselves, and has given us a blessed presentiment that even yet it may be different, if we only will.

But we do not will; that is the truth. What God at such moments gave and effected in us was the great part. The Devil was only able to do a very little part. But we would not let God take us prisoners, great though His love was, rich the blessings He strove to surround us with. And yet no sooner did the Devil whistle, than we were ready to set out to follow and to serve him.

What wonder then that we are now in Hell?

I have still somewhat to say in this respect. But can I say it? Will it not only be a cry of despair?

The idea that Lili was my guardian angel, and that God in His mercy had sent her to lead me back from the path of destruction, frequently rose up in my mind. There was

something unspeakably touching in it; and I did not omit to form many good resolutions. But the emotion never came to an open rupture; there was never any earnestness about my repentance. I was willing enough to give Lili, but not God, my heart.

So Lili's mission turned out fruitless, and there was no salvation for me.

Now in Hell, I have come to the conviction that had I received God's grace, and become a new man, Lili would have lived, lived with me, and have made me happy! Is it not terrible?

Even at the very last, when death was beginning to curdle through her veins, aye through mine and hers too, it would not have been too late; I am perfectly convinced of it. Had I even then gone into myself, as a poor sinner giving God the glory, Lili would have lived. Death would have vanished from between us like a shadow of the night, its deed accomplished, to rouse the sinner from his stupor. God himself would have placed Lili in my arms fresh and warm, and a new blessed life would have lain before me.

She would have lived. But it was altogether vain; no power of love could have broken through the crust around my heart. What could she do else but die? Die then she must; it was a moral necessity; for to live

with me would have been a degradation, to her, a hateful profanation. In the world all ways were blocked up to her; whichever way she turned herself, she must have fallen into my arms. Only by one road could she fly and save her pure soul; it was the road that leads from earth to the kingdom of Heaven. Die then she must! And I am forced to say, "Better for her that it was so!"

But it is with the courage of despair I say it. I could tear myself to pieces without being able to quench the hatred with which I burn against myself. So happy as I might have been! Do you see I have more than a thousand thoughts; but had I only this one, it would contain all the torments of Hell for me. Do you understand now what Hell is? So happy as I could have been—happy first, then for ever blessed! Oh, woe, woe! is this to be borne?

I have been at a ball, a very large one too. As you well know, I have always been somewhat of a *beau*; but I was a ball *beau* but a very short time. It might have been said that I was too big, too much of an athlete to figure well in the dance. It is immaterial! But in my early youth I was passionately fond of dancing. I did not know anything

more enchanting than to glide over the floor to the sound of some lively music, with a lovely young girl on my arms, so entirely *à moi*, that it seemed as if I could have done with her as I pleased. Doubtless, you will call this frivolous. Well, such I was; and most of my companions were like myself. In languishing self-abandonment, in voluptuous self-forgetfulness, she would hang on my arm, only half conscious, her senses in harmony with mine; actuated by the same sensations, our pulses throbbing in unison, beat for beat; breathing, as it were, but with the same breath, that glowed warmly from one to the other. Truly a dangerous position this for two young hearts! It is intoxication, if anything is. For say what one will about dancing in principle, its fascination and charm, especially in the wild dance of modern days, depends solely on the free contact and fusion, as it were, of the two sexes.

And gradually, as the dance proceeds, their intimacy becomes ever more unrestrained. With increasing boldness the man places his arm around his partner's waist, and presses her closer and closer to him; he whirls her more and more wildly through the mazy evolutions of the dance, as if to make her feel how entirely she is in his power. Under the melting

influence of the music, the exertion, and the magic powers of excitement, she hangs a prey upon his arms. Truly, it is unnatural when voluptuousness does not positively demand a victim on such occasions.

I do not think any one would accuse me of prudery; but certainly if I had a sister, I should not like to see her thus tossed about from one strange man's arms to another's the whole night through. And had I seen Lili thus carried away in a man's embrace through the voluptuous mazes of the dance, I believe I should have struck him to the ground.

I remember two objections I had against dancing—when of riper years—as it is usually practised now. I was, I may state, always somewhat of an admirer of the beautiful in nature. First, that people dance through ten, fifteen, or even twenty years of their life. Surely some few years would be enough. Then dancing would resemble the graceful fluttering of the butterfly when it has emerged from the chrysalis. Let young people dance—becoming dances, of course. Dancing is a beautiful and natural thing to them, aye, and innocent too. For they are as yet unconscious of a voluptuous nature; it still slumbers beneath the transparent covering of the ideal.

And secondly, that people drain the plea-

sures of the dance to the very dregs. Let the dance cease while the animal spirits are still healthy. The butterfly must not lose the dust upon its wings. Neither should dancing become a passion, for it will not fail to excite other passions. A whole night's dancing is more than a carousal. Only look at those pale, jaded, dusty female forms—what a piteous, sorrowful spectacle! How beautiful, how fresh, they looked when the ball began! Can a father submit to see his daughter, a brother his sister, a man his betrothed, in such a degrading plight?

It was a large and brilliant ball. The company was certainly of a varied and motley nature; but even this enhanced the interest. The illuminations were dazzling, after the poor opportunities Hell affords, at least. I say poor, for a thousand lamps do not make it one whit the lighter. The flame is merely an illusion; not a ray of light issues from it. The orchestra was fully occupied; but it was only dumb music. Everything in Hell is illusive, consequently so is the music. One fancies one can hear it, and so one dances. They were mostly Strauss' waltzes they played. But when by chance I happened to look over the books of the performers, I found to my amazement that, instead of the notes of Strauss, the famous dance-music composer, they

had the writings of the theologian lying open before them.

The ladies' toilettes were brilliant. The fashions of at least two centuries were represented. So that, from the variety of costume, the ball bore a striking resemblance to a masquerade. But on the other hand, nothing could less resemble one; for all the finery and magnificence was transparent. One could see, spite of all the superincumbent clothing, the real naked individual beneath. Attractive, certainly; there were lovely forms in numbers! But do not let us speak of it. In Hell, attraction has lost all its force.

They tried to get me to dance; but I was too prudent to make a fool of myself in my old days. I merely took part in a Polonaise, and that certainly was something more interesting than ever I have experienced before, either in the world or in Hell.

We promenaded round the spacious saloon, and changed ladies *à tempo*, thereby enabling us to introduce ourselves to, and interchange conversation with, all the belles present.

Yes, it was a remarkable variety, truly! In order to expedite one in making out the social bearings, and to promote the general hilarity, a custom prevails here for everybody at all great gatherings like these to wear the year

of his death on his breast, either in the form of an elegant bow, or an order-like decoration. We found it a great advantage on the present occasion.

I cannot deny myself the gratification of introducing some of these ladies to you. And as I mention no names, I think I can do so without any breach of discretion.

What do you say? It will form a very neat album.

1.—1789. German. A noted poisoner. In the course of a few years she had poisoned her mother-in-law, her husband, her brothers; in short, with but one or two exceptions, the whole family. And it was not for the sake of gain, nor of hatred; neither was it under the impulse of any particular passion, that she committed these murders, but merely for pleasure. A female monster, who doubtless stands alone in history, as she surpasses all human experience. Delicately made, and graceful in person, she wears a face of almost childlike innocence; a velvety softness distinguishes her whole being. She is graceful, fascinating, rubs against you like a cat. It is impossible to come any nearer to the enigma of her unnatural being than to say that she must have come into the world as a cat in human form. I shuddered as she laid her soft, deli-

cate arm on mine, and pressed gently against me. We exchanged but one glance; the full light of her greenish eyes fell on me for a moment. I knew that she was false, cruel, and yet I let myself be fascinated. It was not horror alone that made my heart throb; and yet —shall I own it?—it was with reluctance that I let go her arm to proceed on my way.

2.—1693. A Provençe woman. Married with a Court official; long reputed to be the most lovely woman at the Court of Louis XIV. And she was virtue itself, up to a certain point. For instance, she had never known any other passion than for gold. It was an official secret, that thirty thousand livres was the price of the most lovely woman's virtue. For that sum—be it said with shame!—any one was for sale. Therefore, she was known about Court by the *sobriquet* Danaë.

3.—1816. A Polish lady. A modern heroine: commanded a squadron under Kosciusko. Very beautiful; perfect in figure, and in features; but her great attraction consisted in her morality. Never yet conquered! Never yet had she known any other love than that of her country. Her whole character was of a piece; for she was brave and hardy as a man, though at the same time as delicate, refined,

and graceful as a woman. Never yet conquered! By constantly adhering to this principle, she made her fortune in the world; and she made her fortune many times; for she was really brave; she never succumbed to circumstances, however adverse they might be, but continually raised herself above them. And nothing deceived her; even in her eight and thirtieth year, she was quite youthful, and extremely pretty. Never conquered! With this avowal she gained her last success, when, in 1811, she entered the harem of Mahomet Ali, with princely magnificence.

4.—1644. An Irishwoman. One of the mistresses of the unfortunate Charles I. I recognised her from a masterly portrait by Vandyck, which I had seen in London. Never has the world seen anything more coquettish than this lady. One might almost be tempted to call her the ideal of a flirt.

5.—1635. A German. Voluptuous, languishing, dazzling, especially by her large full eyes, and her transparent complexion. A traitress; herself betrayed. Left in Bologna, in great poverty and misery, a modern Ariadne, she was compelled to seek her subsistence by begging, in order not to fall to lower degradation.

It was also a bad time for the renowned painter, Guido Reni. Gambling had become

more to him than his profession. He was constantly squandering his money away; while his pictures lost their charm, and funds came in but scantily. Thus he was well nigh worn away with pondering over how the matter really lay, and what it was he had lost as an artist, and how he should win it back again. Of what he lost in money, he took no account. But whilst he was pondering, he continued to gamble more madly than ever, and squandered away both his money and his talents.

One day he had lost everything he possessed, and more too. But as he was leaving the gaming-house, a young woman stood outside, with her hand outstretched in a suppliant attitude. A curse hovered on his lips, but he repressed it, for he had never before noticed such an expression of entreaty. As if petrified, he remained standing before the woman, who without speaking was yet so eloquent in her languishing, heaven-turned gaze. It was a perfect novelty, or at all events might easily pass for one; it was a supernatural loveliness. Instantly he perceived what a gold mine this look alone opened for him. He had found the long-sought-for motive for a fresh flight aloft in his profession; a means whereby once more to enchant a superficial world.

So at first he left off gambling, and gave

himself up once more to painting, with a zeal which at least resembled inspiration. The young German woman served as his model, and continued to be of use to him even long after her complexion had lost its brilliancy, and her form its luxuriant beauty; for the look still remained behind—that wondrous, blessed look.

First, he painted from his model a dying Lucretia; then, a dying Cleopatra; then, a dying Virginia; and next a living Virgin; and with this last exertion, he rested long on his laurels. His pictures made a tremendous success, and were in great demand. So he was obliged to bestow less time and care on them; but the look was there still, and people were content.

This look attained a world-wide fame, and gained many imitators; but Guïdo Reni was the inventor of it, and remained the master. Neither did he ever forget her to whom he owed the discovery. Frivolous Guido might be, but he was not ungrateful. As long as he lived, La Tedesca remained his friend, and he shared everything with her; but when she died, it was all over with him; his pictures became worse and worse; the look was wanting; the complexion assumed a greenish, unhealthy-looking, corpse-like colour. And bad

fortune too attended him at the gaming-table, till at last, utterly exhausted, he sank into the tomb.

6.—1731. An Andalusian; of half Moorish blood; a brilliant beauty, unrivalled in the dance. She seemed to be under the influence of a monomania; only one thought appeared to possess her even in this place and in the very midst of the dance. When I happened to address some remark to her, with reference to the pomp and magnificence of the ball, she answered, with a look that went to my soul: "I could have been so happy!" The next moment she had vanished.

7.—1810. An Englishwoman. A renowned clairvoyante, known in Paris as "La Belle Blonde." Chevalier Melville, one of those who, by the payment of a hundred louis-d'ors, had learnt the secret of animal magnetism from Mesmer himself, was the lucky discoverer and fortunate exhibitor of La Belle Blonde's natural talents. During the day-time the fair Englishwoman was the property of the whole Parisian world; of an evening, of an elegant and select circle, who could and would pay an *entrée* of forty francs; and of a night, if report spoke true, of the fortunate chevalier only.

But if La Belle Blonde was a clairvoyante, the chevalier was not. For early one morning

his angel decamped, with the money-box. They wittily remarked in Paris, that it doubtless was as it should be. The somnambulist had at last become quite enraptured. It was ecstasy in the highest degree: "She had been spirited away!"

8.—1651. A Swedish peasant girl from Dalarne. Her rare beauty raised her through numerous adventures to the rank of a princess; but she was not worthy of this elevation. "Have you seen the assassin of King Gustavus?" she asked me in a whisper. "There he stands!" I looked; but of what I saw, I will be silent.

9.—1848. How astonished I was! At home in my dining-room hung a superb picture, by a well-known artist. It was a three-quarter length portrait in natural size, representing a Roman beggar girl, in her picturesque rags, enchantingly lovely. A number of pictures in the interval from 1835 to 1842 are taken after her. For of course she was a model.

She was of genuine Roman blood, born in Trastevere, and a true type of a Roman beauty. Face, figure, deportment, and carriage, all were equally admirable in her. And those rags—there was a regular enchantment about them!

Our ladies of fashion in their full, elegant

toilettes; how poor, how silly they looked beside her in her rags! Was it the contrast between them and her beauty; or was it only the manner in which she wore them, and knew how to arrange them in an ever-changing style? Enough is it to say that there could not be anything more picturesque or enchanting.

But she even loved those rags of hers; she was actually proud of them, and would not have exchanged them for the costliest clothes. For she felt that not only did the fascination she exercised depend on them, but her independence too, and liberty. Her name was Paolina; but among the strangers of Rome she was generally known as "*La reina dei mendicanti*," the "beggar queen;" or simply "*La reina.*" Here I had the original of my picture; I saw "*La reina*" before me!

One evening, as I was passing through one of the small streets of Rome, a young woman came flying after me, and clinging tightly to my arm prayed me to protect her. And I did protect her. It was "*La reina!*"

When the danger was happily passed, I followed her home, and we walked through the dark streets on terms of the greatest intimacy. But I was not generous enough not to try and take advantage of my position. Then

I first got to know "*La reina!*" She repulsed me with a seriousness, though with a good-nature, that was not to be gainsaid. With an openness which is only to be found in Italy, she next explained her position to me, and, in fact, made me her confidant. "She was happy now, very happy," she said. "Many were fond of her; nobody dared to insult her, and she was free as a bird in the air. If she let herself be tempted, everything would be lost; she would become a mere rag among rags. But these rags, so long as she could wear them with honour, she would not exchange for velvet, gold, or ermine."

Then she confided to me without mentioning names, what magnificent and tempting offers had been made her. But she had, "*sia benito Iddio*," not felt the temptation. In short, it was I who was conquered on this occasion. I did not take a kiss, but she gave me one, from the fullness of her heart, with tenderness, yet without passion; and so we parted. As I could not gain possession of her any other way, I had her picture taken.

But some years later "*La reina*" suddenly disappeared. The noble, proud beggar girl had been able to withstand all temptations; there was only one thing she had not taken into account, and that was love. At last it

had caught her. She loved and gave herself away. A heaven seemed to open itself to her; but yet her happy days were over. In her rags she had been a queen; in silk and velvet she was nothing but a slave.

Well for her if she had not had to experience anything worse. But, alas! it was not to be so. Betrayed again and again, she became wild and terrible. A demon was awakened within her; she did not even shrink back from low crimes. Revenge and compensation she would have. Even still she was a prodigy of loveliness, graceful no longer, but always majestic. With a cold, though glowing heart she soared aloft, till at last she succeeded in turning the head of a sensual old prince. Only for a moment did she stand in all the fullness of her splendour, like a meteor in the sky, yet long enough to get her revenge. With a crash and a fall her glittering career came to an end. She fell never more to rise.

Now once more her arm rested on mine. Oh, what a gulf between now and then; when we were wandering late that evening hour so confidingly through the streets of Rome. In her attire, though it did not now consist of rags, I could plainly trace the fantastic style of old, happy days.

Involuntarily I sighed, "Only in innocence is true happiness to be found!" I recognised

her at once; and yet how changed! How she regarded me as I bent over her and whispered: "*La reina! Sta sempre in ricordanza!*" With almost feverish haste she replied, enlivened up for the moment, but still quivering with all the anguish of past reminiscences:

"*O state Zitto, Zitto! Nell' inferno tutt' e finito! La gioja, l' incuranza, l' amorè, la speranza!*"

You must not suppose that I got all these revelations, or even a portion of them, while dancing the Polonaise; our opportunities for conversation were too short and transient.

After we had saluted each other, or the introduction was over, there was merely time to interchange a few words, when we had to separate again.

But I knew a good many of these ball belles beforehand, and not only that, but their histories too. Nothing can be hidden here in Hell, and news spreads with surprising speed—so I have easily been able to procure every desirable information concerning some of these interesting ladies.

Thus you will readily understand in what great danger I stood of losing myself, when the idea occurred to me of giving you at haphazard an account of some of the frequent incidents that occurred in the changes of the Polonaise. The materials are so rich that

selection is a very difficult matter; and one is in danger of telling more than is necessary, and than had been intended. But enough of this. Even the longest ball must have an end.

As I was on the point of leaving the ball a person came up to me, to all appearances a regular rake, with the intrusive remark:

"You seem to me to understand all the minutiæ. But have you ever been at the 'great ball?' *Das ist ganz 'was ánders. Ich sag' Ihnen, ganz famos!*" And he smacked his tongue.

I did not know what the fellow meant by the "great ball," and I had no inclination to ask him any questions about it. It was not long, however, before I had an opportunity of fully satisfying my curiosity.

Towards the time when the death-darkness comes on, a regular rapture seizes all the denizens of Hell. All powers are strained to the enjoyment of the short period which is still left. That this, like everything else, is an illusion, and merely causes pain, is, of course, a natural consequence. Gambling, debauchery, dissoluteness, all manner of foolish and shameless diversions have free and unrestrained bent; there seems to be but one aim—to excite, to intoxicate, and to stupefy the senses. And for this end there are a thousand illusive means.

Everything is now allowed; nothing too wild, too mad, or too disgraceful, but finds approval and excuse. The rabble, in every sense of the word, is predominant, and he meets with the greatest respect who carries his dissipation the farthest. At such a time, respectable people have hard work not to commit themselves. I do not at all mean by this that respectable people are not infected by the excitement. No! all, without exception, are sucked into the whirl, as the so-called "large ball" testifies. But the difference is this, that whatever way things turn out, the respectable people are desirous of observing a decorous behaviour. But it is well nigh impossible.

Yet what need to explain my meaning at greater length?

You have something similar to it in the world; I mean—at that time when you give way to mirth, when all the devils are let loose, just before the long fast—the Carnival. The death-darkness is our long fast. But we have neither a Maundy Thursday nor a Good Friday. You have; and you make every preparation to celebrate them becomingly. In a word, merriment with us is simply nothing but an exaggerated caricature of your Carnival.

Our merriment ends with the "great ball."

All classes, intermingled in the most motley manner, participate in it. Certainly we try and form our own circle; but we can but imperfectly succeed in doing so. For every large place has its own peculiar ball; but the ball goes through the whole of Hell, and it is an endless swarming to and fro.

Where genteel people try to give it a tone, the ball is opened very becomingly. The ladies are dressed in their most elegant toilettes, and the gentlemen are got up as beaux of the first water. Chastely and elegantly the dancing begins to the strains of the still, mildly lively music. But little by little they begin to turn round more quickly; they swing, they fly, they whirl themselves round. Their eyes become fixed in their heads, glassy and staring; the half-open mouth seems to breathe forth flames of passion. If any mortal were present, he would call that wild dance to the silent music repulsive; but soon he would call it appalling. Ever more quickly the dancers press up against each other, bosom against bosom, face against face. On the one side voluptuous languishment; on the other brutal lust. (Have you ever been in Paris during the Carnival?)

And, meanwhile, darkness comes on apace, ever more quickly, just as in warm climates,

where the sun at last does not sink down, but, as it were, falls below the horizon. So quickly does the last gleam of light in Hell vanish away!

But the dancers pay no heed to it. Wider and wider grows the whirling maze. But do not think that it is a pleasant diversion; no, it is full of anguish. They dance away as if they were lashed on to it. Mirth is present, but the intoxication is lacking.

Soon the ladies have lost all their gracefulness and delicacy; rumpled female figures remain behind, with hollow eyes, pale cheeks, withered lips, dishevelled hair, and disordered dress. And the gentlemen! Yes, it can only be said that they look like actual beasts!

Well is it that the darkness falls so quickly to hide this disgusting spectacle. No longer is it possible to discern man from woman in those intertwined forms. No longer is it they who whirl; the whirl has carried them away; they are unable to raise a voice against it. Ever more swiftly, ever more madly, they twirl round and round, till they disappear in the gloom.

Then all is over!

CHAPTER XXII.

You have doubtless experienced the power some flowers have in calling up recollections, especially sweet recollections, and, in like manner in awakening slumbering passions and lusts. In the world this lust may be a pleasurable pain; but here—yes, here it is a real Hell.

You must not conclude from this that there are flowers in Hell. There is, in fact, nothing; actually nothing. Even withered flowers belong exclusively to the world. Oh, ye fools! Is there needed anything more than this to convince you that the world, with all its wants, pains, and sorrows, is still a blessed and supremely happy place? Is there needed anything than this, that it is bestrewed with flowers? It is the superabundance of God's fatherly goodness, that streams over on all sides and produces the flowers. They are of no use these millions of flowers; but they necessarily spring from the Being of eternal love. They are like pearls on the cup of heavenly blessings.

Flowers below, and stars above! Oh, how delightful to roam between the flowers and the stars! But you follow your noses without paying heed to the flowers below, or to the stars above, lost as you are in your miserable little self-individuality, with its thousand imaginary vexations and troubles. Oh, fools, fools, fools!

No, there are no flowers in Hell. But it is a part of our anguish here now and then to catch their perfume. Of course it is imagination; but so much the more powerful is the perfume, and so much the greater the effect it has. It is not only situations and moods that are thereby conjured forth, but real living persons, all the fullness of life in a given moment. Can you comprehend the meaning of this—"all the fullness of life and happiness conjured forth in a place where only death and boundless misery exist?"

Now it is a carnation! It sends forth its perfume from that young girl's bosom with the dark complexion, and black, sparkling eyes. At length I have been so fortunate as to get her alone with me for a moment. She struggled as I knelt before her; a hard contest between love and anger.

Now it is voluptuously stupefying jasmine! In that shady summer-house I and that slight,

light-haired girl had found a refuge from the burning noon-day sun. I had so much to tell her, but forgot it all in the expression of her blue melting eyes, in the perfume of the jasmine that waved its fragrance around us.

Now it is a softly intoxicating honeysuckle! We were taking an evening ramble through the grove. On the morrow we were to part, I and that graceful young wife with her melancholy, brown eyes, and that sad smile, who was chained to a clod of a husband. She called me her friend, and gave me a piece of honeysuckle. But I could not refrain, on this occasion, from giving her a tender name.

These reminiscences, the sweeter they are the more fascinating, the more cruelly do they lacerate the soul. They stir up the passions and desires to such a degree as almost to drive one mad. They burn through the bones and marrow, though the flesh no longer exists, and though there are no longer any means to quench them.

It is always the strong-scented flowers whose power I thus trace out. I never detect the perfume of such delicately-scented flowers as the violet or the mignonette. And yet there is one single exception; and though it is not devoid of pain, still I bless it. Of late I have often detected the delicate perfume of

a rose. I know that rose; I can see it before me. Only but a breath, as it were, of pink is spread over its tender petals; only in its centre is there a little blush. At a glance one might think it was a white rose; but I know it better, it is a red one. Lili once gave it to me; or rather I begged it of her, otherwise it would scarcely have occurred to her to give it me. We were standing one forenoon in the church of St. Mark in Venice, before the altar of the Madonna with its remarkable Byzantine paintings. For an instant we were alone; a poor cripple had just hobbled away, blessing us a thousand times. A hallowed feeling had insinuated itself into my heart; hallowed, possibly, just because the beggar had called Lili "*La sua sposa.*" Lili either ha dnot heard it, or had not comprehended it. She was standing with a rose in her hand, the express image of herself.

"Give me that rose, Lili!" I entreated. She gave it without hesitation.

"No, you must kiss it first," I said. She kissed the flower, and then handed it me with one of her ravishing smiles.

Of course I kissed it too. Lili blushed a little; though, in her innocence, she certainly did not understand the meaning of it.

It is this rose whose perfume I have so often

of late detected. What can it mean? Is there a peculiar, transcendental, connecting link between the souls in bliss and those in torment, like a wave of sweet perfume? Oh, happy thought! Could I but retain it. . . . Ah, it is gone already.

The awful moment is approaching, when the brilliant glow from Paradise will stream forth triumphantly; yes, it must be very near. And shall I see her again. Even if it be to my sorrow, no matter! I shall see her again. Terrible will it be to relapse once more into darkness; but her image no one can deprive me of. Even amid the torments of Hell it beams upon me. Can I be utterly forsaken of God in this communion with one of his saints? I know that she thinks of me, as I do of her. Yes, and what is more, I know that she loves, even though it be with no more than a sisterly love. Oh, what shall I say? . . . Can God be a Father under conditions like these—the sister in Heaven, the brother in Hell, eternally lost?

You remember that I recently alluded to a treaty that had gone the way of all flesh, and had arrived in Hell. Drawn up in the name of the Triune God, and "for all time," it had lasted scarce twelve years; that is to say, only

until one of the Great Powers that had sworn to observe it found a favourable opportunity for treading it under foot. In short, it was the old tale over again of the case between wolf and the lamb. Unhindered by the other parties to the treaty, who, imposed upon by the impudence of the deed, drew back with growls—their honour, of course, unimpaired—the strong had brought the little and the weak quickly into subjection, and had done with him as he pleased; of course for no self-interested purpose, but only in the service of justice, and for the sake of dear peace. The wolf knows well enough how to overlay his words.

Well! the poor little one was obliged to keep the peace, and accept whatever terms were offered. The result of this peace was of course another treaty, drawn up anew in the name of the Holy Trinity—think, what blasphemy!—and again to hold good through all time—what shamelessness!

But worse still! The first article in it determines, that for the future there shall not only be peace, but friendship, between their majesties and their respective peoples. Think, after the strong had robbed the weak, even to his very shirt, and had got all he wished, to offer him his friendship, and for the poor fellow to be obliged to extend his hand! It is a piece

of impudence that surpasses human nature, and merges far into the diabolical.

You may, then, readily understand that such a treaty as this, even without being torn asunder, must needs travel to Hell; and it came before the ink was well dry. But what you will not so readily understand, perhaps, entangled as you are in the twaddle and prejudices of the world, is, that this treaty, even in Hell, has excited attention, and is in everybody's mouth. In a certain circle I have heard nothing else spoken of since it came here.

These introductory remarks were essential to the proper comprehension of what follows.

I was recently in church. It was not the first time, but I have felt almost ashamed to speak about it. And in fact I continued away from it out of choice; but here, in Hell, one must do a great deal that one has no inclination to do, under the influence of a powerful impulse from within. Need I add that one feels very miserable at having to go in harness and endure the lash in this way.

Yes, we have a Church Establishment. There is, indeed, nothing wanting in Hell. We have everything that is; and yet it is as if we had nothing.

Of any common church, you understand, there can of course be no mention; and so

I only said a Church Establishment—I might just as well have said Church Dis-establishment; it would be all one. Just as little, of course, can there be any mention of a congregation, or any confession, or in fact of anything essential and real. "We go to church," and that says everything. . . . But, God have mercy on us, what a church-going it is!

There are about as many churches as there are priests in Hell, and their number is not so few. All infidel and unfaithful priests, all those who have outraged the Gospel for the sake of gain, who have only been hirelings over God's flock, are gathered together here. Now they are consumed by a burning zeal for the Gospel, but the Gospel is ever absent; by love towards the flock, but there is a flock no longer. They build church after church, and preach day in and day out. If they only could succeed in getting one single word of God out, both they and their hearers would be saved. But they cannot, and never will succeed. However, they are driven by a certain inexorable power to make the attempt again and again, ever to be searching after the pearl which they once trod under foot in the dirt.

And people here are as mad after God's word now as ever they despised it before. Hell is full of Christians—it sounds strange,

but so it is—namely, of all those with whom Christianity was merely a name, a habit, a custom, a cloak for knavery; of all those who, though they heard the glad tidings of salvation early and late, never gave themselves the trouble to appropriate to themselves salvation in a new and a better existence; of all those who either dallied with holy things, or shamefully fell away when the time of trial was at hand. Now they are devoured with a ravenous craving after God's word; and if they could but hear one single word, they would be released from their suffering. But they never will hear it; and they know it well; most of them have a lengthened experience. But, however, they cannot do aught else than incessantly flock again and again to the place which they call church, and listen to what the persons have to say whom they denominate priests.

So the churches are always crowded. But for all that it is never difficult to find room; for a spirit, a shade, can contract himself to an infinite degree. Therefore, neither is there any need to subscribe to a seat in the church, as is the case in theatres, where the purse decides the matter. That is one advantage Hell has over the world! But it never occurs to any one to congratulate himself thereon.

The other day I was at a large and very animated party. It was there, just for curiosity's sake, that I delivered those brilliant lectures, which among many others had been held in our *Landdag* with reference to our church constitution. They created a wonderful sensation among the company, and from thence extended to a wider circle. Quite certain is it, that better subject for comic declamation in Hell had never been known before.

Among the guests was a Pastor R—— I had nearly mentioned his name; but you know it is contrary to my principles to do so. He was a good old acquaintance of mine.

In his time he was a much admired sensational preacher, with great powers of declamation, and not a little proud of his gift withal. In other respects he was one of those priests whom the world calls liberal, and in every sense thinks nothing beneath him saving the purely spiritual. When we were separating he said to me:

"Come to hear me some time or other! My church is at the corner of Carnal Lust and Frailty"—do not be surprised at our street names—"fronting the first-named one. Any child can show you the way. I have just got a splendid sermon on the stocks."

He used the word "child," and you must not be led astray by the expression. Of children, that is to say, of actual children, there are none in Hell. But do not people in the world use the expression, "great babies," or "old children?" Are there not numbers of persons who reach a high age without ever being grown up? Well, of such old children there are more than can be counted fooling about in Hell!

So I went to hear my *quondam* reverend friend, at the corner of Carnal Lust and Frailty. As well him as any one else! Nothing came of it, however, except spiritual prostration.

I came in rather late. The Communion Service before the sermon was just over, and a hymn was being sung. But, great God, what a song! Instead of songs of praise, the most lewd songs I ever have heard assailed my ears, the very refuse of humanity. But the greater proportion of the congregation consisted not only of the better, so-called respectable class, but even of the educated, refined classes. Old men, whose hoary hair should have inspired one with veneration; young women, whom one would have thought were innocence itself, took as it were an ecstatic part in this shameless choral song. Father and mother took the lead for

their children; the husband for his wife or sweetheart, without any sense of shame.

Alas! scarcely had I taken my seat among the others, than I was just as bad as the rest! In obedience to an irresistible impulse, I too joined in the diabolical hymn. My aspirations had a sacred direction; it was my earnest wish to sing praises. But I was compelled to blaspheme as soon as ever I opened my mouth, however much I shrunk from it. The lewdness in my nature, as it were, tickled me, till I let myself be fascinated as the others.

At last the singing was over, and the priest stood up in the pulpit with a hallowed air. But this lasted only a moment, when he began to make the most hideous and ridiculous grimaces; and it was some time before he became so far master of his refractory features, as to be able to commence with—

"My devout hearers . . . "

It was quite evident that it was his intention to preach a sermon edifying both to himself and to the congregation. But he could get no farther in the direction of edification. For the most abominable balderdash poured forth from his lips. It was all in vain that he tried to check and restrain himself; he only fell from one slough of twaddle into the other. By an extraordinary exertion at last he ma-

naged to break off, and a pause ensued. Presently he began again, with an immense degree of assumed dignity—

"My devout hearers. . . ."

And, imagine my surprise, when he blandly introduced the "weaver's" speech in the Church reformation matter with an indescribably comic effect. He weaved away just as if he had the texture before him. If ridicule had been his aim, he could not possibly have done it better. But nothing was farther from his thoughts, and it was that which made it still more comical. Quite dumbfoundered he strove to tear himself away from the flood of eloquence which was carrying him up and down, hither and thither, along with it. And at length he succeeded! He takes a new direction with extreme unction, and promises better things. But, oh, love! before he is himself aware of it, he is already far advanced in the speech of the fire brigade inspector on the same occasion.

Had it been a trick, it would have been incomparable. For it was a totally new kind of declamation, and the transition was quite sudden. He had done with the loom, and began to squirt now. In lofty jets at intervals the water streamed out, and sprinkled the souls below. But it possessed no extin-

guishing property. On the contrary, the result was an irrepressible laughter, in which none, even with the best of wills, could keep from joining in.

But this boisterous applause was not at all encouraging to the speaker. It was just the very reverse; he writhed piteously. Once more he strained all his powers to obtain a hearing. It was a critical moment, and it seemed as if he would succeed; for when, after a short pause, he began again, it was really himself that was speaking. But, oh, fate! the next instant he had fallen into the empty, abrupt phraseology of the literate! It was just as if he were cracking empty nuts (there was not even a worm in them), and was throwing the shells over the people's heads. There was only one thought in his discourse, and that was not his, but the hearers'—"Where is the kernel? where is the kernel?" His lecture lifted itself higher from moment to moment. From hazelnuts he mounted to walnuts, and from walnuts to cocoa-nuts; crack, crack;—they were all empty! At this giddy height of emptiness he soared quite away; nobody could follow him any longer. At last he became so enormously hollow in his address that even the emptiest heads and hearts were all on the work, and the arches of

the roof, from want of elasticity, were rent into large fissures.

Whereupon the laughter grew so boisterous, and the tumult so crazing, that the preacher was obliged to stop *nolens volens*. With a convulsive twitch he slid away from the literate's moral embrace, and, crest-fallen, slunk out of the pulpit.

In order to guard against every misapprehension with reference to the clamour and mirth I have just described, let me *en passant* remark—

Have you ever heard the noise a living person's bowels can make? Well, it was just like that. And have you ever heard a person grinding his teeth and laughing in his sleep, under the influence of gripes in the stomach? The merriment and the laughter was exactly similar.

Directly the clergyman had left the pulpit the clerk began to intone a solo in a cracked voice. For a long time he was in a state of perplexity as to what he should do, till at last he began a well-known lewd military song with all his might and main, and the song was sung in full chorus with horrible reverence.

Then came the concluding part of the service.

"In the name of the Triune God," began the priest.——

We were all attention; it was a very devout beginning. I listened with my whole soul.

At the same moment the clerk tried to make himself as small as he could, and to slip by the priest. But as he was on the point of adroitly escaping, the priest seized hold of him by the neck with a powerful grasp, threw him under his feet, and in a trice stripped him of coat, waistcoat, and shirt—it looked exactly as if he was stripping off his skin—and then continued, holding the unfortunate clerk under him the while with an iron hand, as if nothing had occurred :—

"First Article.

"For the future there shall be peace and friendship between the priest and clerk and their respective houses and families.

"Second Article.

* * * * *

And so he continued to chant article after article, and at every fresh article gave the clerk a good squeeze by the throat, in order that he might make no mistake about his position. The involuntary nod the poor fellow made signified his hearty assent. The assembly evinced their approval in very different ways. Some laughed, and cried, "Bravo! cursed good!" But the greater number growlingly showed their disapprobation.

And yet there was not a single soul that stirred an inch.

The priest continued his ungodly service. How many articles there were I cannot say, for I had soon got more than enough. With a heavy heart—oh, so heavy!—I slunk out of church.

Yes, heavy! It was no wonder. It is hope that lightens the heart. When hope disappears the heart becomes heavier and heavier; and when hope is utterly gone, it becomes too heavy to be borne—at least by a mortal. With us who are dead—alas! . . . it is another affair.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Is it not strange, but at the same time horrible, that the sweeter a recollection, the more bitter does it become to my heart in this place? I am a prey to sheer despair. Not always to that raging despair to which I give vent, but to that which is quite motionless, because it feels death in itself, and suffers all the agony of death.

Despair in Hell is our daily bread; it never quits us. Of course, now and then it must rage forth; but that still despair is the worst.

At times, when I am sitting buried in myself,—with closed eyes I had nearly said, but it is indifferent; here it is of no avail to close the eyes; but—I mean lost in myself, I experience the strangest feelings and perceptions.

A short while ago I thought I was all of a sudden set down in a wood in spring time. It was one of those lovely days when spring has just burst through the bonds of winter in triumph; and not only is all nature

glad, but the human heart, too, rejoices. Yet nowhere is the vernal feast so gloriously kept, nowhere has it such a magic power, and such exaltation, as in the wood.

The varied notes of the woodland songsters echoed clearly in my ear, and made my heart throb with an indescribable excitement. The perfume of the forest streamed towards me in scented waves, and filled my breast with its refreshing influence. And, to make the enchantment complete, I thought I could hear Lili's sweet voice through the wood.

I sprung to my feet, and looked around me in a state of great agitation. Oh, what anguish! So happy as I had been. And where was I now? For me there was no longer the song of birds, no sweet perfume, no love.

One summer we were staying in the country near the beautiful lake F——. On the farther shore the well-known forest of G——, with its sloping hills and dales, extends for miles in all directions, with its changing lights and shadows. My mother had a party of old friends staying with her, so that I was at liberty to pass my time as I pleased, when I came to spend a few days at a time with her. And I enjoyed my freedom, and the beautiful summer, in a way which I shall never forget.

Whenever we were able I and Lili used to set out early in the morning across the lake to spend the day, gipsy fashion, in the forest, where I knew no one could find us. To me it was especially delightful thus to withdraw, and, as it were, disappear from the busy world. You know, of course, what this forsaking the world signified with me. I had no idea of giving up the world to win the Kingdom of Heaven; nothing lay farther from my thoughts! No; young as I was, I was already beginning to be *blasé*, tired and weary of the world, without having anything better to set in its place. And yet, I must not do myself injustice. Perhaps some nobler, some higher impulse was at work within me.

And Lili too found some pleasure in thus losing herself, as she termed it. But there was this great difference between us, that while anything unnatural offended me, nature drew her to herself. "We will try for once to live a wild uncivilized life!" I said to myself, as I took Lili by the hand, and plunged into the thickest part of the wood with her. And we did do so as far as we could. A gipsy's life was my pattern. We passed the whole day in leisurely wandering about in all directions, without aim or object, giving up ourselves entirely to enjoyment. Whenever we came to a spot that looked inviting, we

would rest there a while, and then set off to discover other places as beautiful or as interesting. I had taken good care beforehand to have provisions ready for us in different places, at the cottages of the forest rangers; while at the same time we also took something with us.

Lili was at that time just about twelve years old. My mother did not particularly approve of these excursions, but did not say much about it, as she knew well enough that I should not willingly relinquish them.—"Only do not make Lili too wild!" she contented herself with saying. But there was no fear of that; it would have taken much to have led a nature like Lili's astray. On the other hand these excursions did her a great deal of good, for it was such a change from the cribbed, confined life she usually led.

They were charming days; Lili's company was as refreshing to me as the fresh, sweet perfume of the forest. All her charms, mental and physical, displayed themselves to view on these wanderings. Like a regular child she prattled away, and amused herself, laughing and shouting for joy at she knew not what, so that the echoes rang again through the wood. How perfectly free and graceful were all her movements! She must examine everything, bounding now on this side, now

on that, finding everywhere something to notice. It was wonderful the quick eye she had for Nature's little secrets! Even the very tiniest thing, how ever it might be hidden, did not esca p her notice. Where other people would have seen nothing at all, she would discover numberless beautiful and strange things, such as plants, animals, and all manner of natural curiosities. It was just as if the wood disclosed all its mysteries to her pure, quick glance. The roe-deer came out of the thickets in perfect confidence to look at her; I verily believe they would have liked to play with her. The fox went gently along the outskirts of the wood and scratched up insects and woodmice for his supper, only now and then cunningly lifting his head, so as not quite to lose sight of her. The birds hopped on the boughs to hail her with their little songs, or twittered up and down the branches to show her their tricks. The squirrel sprung over her head from bough to bough, and followed her right through the wood out of curiosity. The birds' nests were everywhere visible to her, and the bees' nests high up in the hollow trees. If there were ant-hills near by—of the large red-ants—two colonies would begin to wage a bloody war with each other for her diversion. Rare flowers and plants seemed to spear forth

beneath her light footsteps. Once I searched in vain for a specimen of the "mimosa," which I knew ought to grow on a certain spot. Directly she went to look for it it came to her hand, though she did not even know the flower.

How everything enchanted her, and at the same time made her enchanting! Yes, she was lovely; incomparable in my eyes, with her sylph-like movements, with her beaming eyes, her sweet smile, and musical laugh.

At dinner-time we would encamp close by one of the ranger's huts, and light a fire at the foot of a tree to boil the water. If there was a spring close by, so much the better; and there we would pitch our camp, and enjoy the gratuitous music at our banquet. I left the entire housekeeping arrangements to Lili, who was only too pleased to undertake them. How busy she was! how charming she looked! how full of resources! and how thoughtful! Never have I enjoyed such feasts. I used to call her on these excursions my little wife; a title she accepted with a happy smile, and with an air of becoming dignity. And truly, she took such tender care of me, as the best little wife and housekeeper could have done.

Dinner over, she would read aloud while I was enjoying my cigar at my ease. Sometimes I would fall asleep. Then she would

keep guard over me, and brush the gnats and flies away; and when I awoke the first thing I saw, was a pair of bright stars, which were none other than her dear wakeful eyes.

At other times I would read to myself, or pretend to read, while I listened to the melodious sighing of the wind in the tree-tops, or to the numberless mysterious sounds that broke the solemn silence of the forest. At such times Lili was left to her own devices to pass the time away. But she was never unoccupied for a moment; something new was constantly starting up for her. She would weave garlands of flowers, or plait together bands of coloured grasses, or pluck the wild berries to surprise me with a dessert after my dinner. But she never wandered away out of sound of my voice.

In short it was a complete idyl; never have I read or heard of one more beautiful.

One day—we had almost traversed the entire length of the forest—I suddenly came upon a house, which I knew but too well, though it had not been in my thoughts for many a day. It was the very house where I had lived with Anna (another idyl, but of a different nature); where I had ruined her. So great was my thoughtlessness, that I had actually forgotten that we were near the scene

of the most shameless infamy I should ever have to reproach myself with. I started back, I tottered, and almost fell to the ground with emotion; Lili grew alarmed at my paleness. But it was long before I could give any answer to her anxious questions, whilst we hurried away from the spot. What I did at length answer, I do not know; but this I remember, that I could not look her in the face again for that day.

How painful were her tender, anxious inquiries to know what ailed me! She little suspected, poor child, what a foul, hideous deed she was innocently alluding to; what I could have told her was as far remote from her mind as earth from heaven. She little suspected that the very same demon which had ruined Anna was in a manner threatening her; and that I, her friend, her best, her only friend, was the lord or the slave of this demon.

That day we wandered far, but without enjoyment. I had no peace.

Poor Lili, what expectations she had raised of this day, and how brightly it had begun! It turned out sorrowful and wearisome altogether! She was nearly fainting, but I did not notice it.

As we emerged from the wood towards evening to enter the boat, we found the lake

a sheet of foam. A storm had come up, and it threatened to be showery. The waves came rolling in crossways, so that I did not dare to venture out with Lili. There was nothing left for us but to walk round the lake. But poor Lili was tired; and, for a great part of the journey the wind would be against us, and already it was beginning to rain. There was no time, however, to reflect. So I wrapt Lili up in a light overcoat I had with me, and took her up in my arms. In vain she assured me that she could walk. I would and did carry her.

How light a burden she was; how sweet and precious! It seemed to me that I could never weary of carrying her, as I pressed her firmly to my bosom, and hastened along against the storm. It was nearly four miles round the lake, and the road was bad and sandy. Shower after shower broke over us, and the rain dashed in my face. But I was glad to be on the land, to have something in which to exercise my powers for Lili's sake. I heeded nothing.

It was touching to see how anxious she was; every two or three minutes she would express her fears that she was too heavy for me. But when she perceived that I was resolutely bent to hold her in my embrace, how loving and

grateful she became, what sweet, tender words she whispered in my ear, to make my burden lighter, and the road shorter!

I had well-nigh forgotten all about Anna in my happiness! But even at this hour I could not keep the bad thoughts away. I thought of the "Rape of the Sabine Women," *i Loggia dei Ranzi* in Florence. That seductive picture was represented to the life in me and Lili. But I forcibly expelled the unworthy thought from my mind. In order to keep myself in check, and at the same time to amuse Lili, I drew another comparison in my mind that suited our case equally well, though at the same time it was the direct opposite, namely, Saint Christopher carrying the child Jesus.

I began to tell her the legend of the heathen Reprobus, who, conscious of his gigantic strength, would only serve the strongest, and thus at last was referred to the Lord Christ. On his powerful shoulders he carried the Holy Child, and was well nigh fainting under the burden. Then he acknowledged His Master, and obtained the name Christopher.

While I was telling the story, Lili had fallen asleep in my arms. She had twined one arm round my neck, and her warm cheek pressed against mine. Softly I sped along.

But the history I had been narrating made a deep impression on myself. The Saviour so livingly portrayed had penetrated into my being. It was long since I had had any thoughts to spare for Him. But the faith of my childhood, though it lay deeply buried, was not dead yet; it broke forth from the turbid depths of my heart with many a sweet and bitter reminiscence; but the bitter ones were the most powerful. What an amount of debt had I not heaped on my head in my short career! But the greatest of all was what I owed Anna!

Then my burden grew ever heavier and heavier. I had a feeling as if I was wandering along under the burden of my sins. And truly, Lili, whom I carried in my arms, was already numbered among my accusers, though she herself knew it not.

With unsteady gait I hastened along through the murky night. The storm increased each moment; it had become a regular tempest. The rain dashed in my face so as well-nigh to blind me. The water rushed far up the rocky shore along the edge of which the path wound. Sometimes I had to wade through the water, and the waves dashed around me as if they would tear me away with them. It was with great difficulty I could keep on the path, but still I laboured on. The perspiration

streamed out of every pore; but it was no longer the warm moisture of exertion, but the cold sweat of anxiety. It was not from without, but from within, that my strength was failing me. I felt utterly miserable. Harassed with remorse, alarm, and self-contempt, I was at last in the right mood to lose myself, and become a new and a better man. But before it came so far, a light gleamed from the house toward us. My thoughts now were diverted into another channel; and my emotion at the same instant vanished.

Ah! if that path had only been but a thousand paces longer! Those steps might, perhaps, have spared me the journey to the torments of Hell!

When I stood in the lighted parlour, dripping wet, gasping for breath, utterly exhausted, I had left remorse, repentance, and fear, out in the darksome night, and felt only joy at having escaped from them.

Lili awoke now for the first time.

"Oh, what a beautiful dream!" she whispered to me with her eyes still half closed, as I wished her good-night, and kissed her forehead.

Next day she told me her dream.

"I dreamt," she said, "that I was standing on a river's brink, when St. Christopher, carrying the child Jesus on his shoulders, came over

to me from the other side. And the child seated itself by me on the grass on the bank. We talked and played together, and I was so happy. The mighty Christopher was standing by us and watching us, as he leaned on his long staff.

"We plaited the grass stalks in all manner of shapes; but the child was my master. First he plaited a cross, then a crown of thorns, which he put on his head.

"Here and there among the grass were some red flowers that hung down by their long stalks, looking exactly like drops of blood.

"Then he began a different game. He got me to look into his eyes, and asked, 'What do you see?' Yes, what did I see? First I saw the sower, who went out to sow, as clearly as I see you now. Then I saw the good Samaritan; yes, I thought I could hear him speak. Lastly I saw the good Shepherd, with the lost lamb in His arms. And much more could I have seen, when it occurred to me to ask, 'But is it not true that wicked men have crucified Thee and pierced Thy side with a spear?'

"'Yes, you must not doubt it,' He answered. And He showed me the marks of the nails in His hands, and a blood-red scar in His side. Then, when I began to weep bitterly, He added:

"'But, Lili, it pains me no longer; it has long since been healed by my Father's love in Heaven, and by my brothers' and sisters' love on earth.'

"At last he asked, 'Would you like to be carried a little way by my friend Christopher? Where will you go?'

"'I would go to the Holy Land,' I answered quickly; 'but it is so far, and then I shall be parted from you.'

"'It is not so far as it seems,' He answered; 'and we two will never part more. You will find me there too. If you will, then come.'

"Whereupon the mighty Christopher took me up on his shoulders, and wandered far, far away with me. By day he followed a little red cloud: by night a large, shining star. I knew it was the star of Bethlehem. And we passed through many foreign lands; saw many different people, and heard diverse languages; over mountains and valleys, across rivers and floods, and at last across the sea. There was no land to be seen; the waves rolled so high, so high! Then I became terribly frightened, and thought that we should perish. But Christopher said, 'Fear not, my child! I have before now borne the Lord. Your weight is but little to His.'

"So at last we reached the land, and trod

upon a sandy shore. It was the Holy Land. And on we went, past Jerusalem, as the sun rose up; and its white walls upon the heights seemed as glorious as in days of yore. Some few paces farther, and we came to a little village between the mountains. Here the star stood still. I knew that it was Bethlehem.

"Christopher set me down before a lordly-looking house.

"A door opened, and there stood the child Jesus again. He took me by the hand, and led me in, and said to me, with a smile of love, 'Lili, I have but a stable to bid you welcome in here. But when you have done with the world it shall be better for you.'

"And he threw His arms around my neck and kissed me.

"At that moment I awoke. For we were at home. Oh, Otto, I should so like to have dreamed a little longer!"

"Do you not think, dear Lili," I answered in jest, "that it is all that one can desire, in one hour's time, to go from hence to Bethlehem and back again, to say nothing of all the beautiful things you saw?"

"Yes, that is true! I must rest contented till Christ bids me welcome to a better place, to His eternal home," answered Lili quietly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I HAD almost given up all hopes of meeting Anna again; for I had searched so long and to no purpose. She was, as it were, driven away like dust before the wind from my paths, and they were both many and long.

But Hell is a large place, and its inhabitants are numberless.

For a time I had quite forsaken my old habits; I might almost say I lost my senses in roaming about after her in all directions, like a regular vagabond, both in and out of the throng. But an insatiable, hankering longing hurried me along. It burned within me. I thirsted (and such a thirst as that no man has ever felt; no, not even in the desert when death was settling on his lips), I pined away after her. Not that I thought she could slake my thirst; I knew but too well that she was a dried up spring; dried up already in the world, to say nothing of Hell. In vain she wrings out her clothes, her hands and hair;

not a drop of water falls from them. But she carries about with her the key to a frightful mystery, unconsciously to herself. Thus she has attained fresh importance in my eyes, and has once more become the object of my pursuit.

Oh! how different from those days, when the warm, passionate blood flowed through my veins; when in her I saw merely a flower in the great kingdom of nature, which it was worth the while to pluck! I must see her again, study her features, and find, if possible, a confirmation to that terrible thought which had dawned upon me at our last interview. Not that I doubted it; but I was not certain, not positively certain at least. I would like to try the case over again, weigh the testimony, and pass sentence—over myself. It was, therefore, necessary for me to see her again, and, if possible, get her to speak. Her features were certainly credible witnesses; but her tongue was the last great witness that could definitely clear up the matter. It was very doubtful, however, whether I should succeed in getting her to submit to my questions. But whether or no, likely or unlikely, I must find her and make the attempt.

At length, very recently, I met her again.

I did not only meet her, but came behind her. She was sitting by the river, and staring down so fixedly into its black, slimy depths, as if she entertained the thought of throwing herself in. In very truth there is something in Hell which at least resembles satisfaction.

For a moment I forgot myself and everything else in contemplating her. Cautiously I crept nearer and nearer; and by stretching myself out flat on its bank like a shadow in the sunshine, got quite close to her. I was scarce distinguishable from the miry bank.

Leisurely and at my ease, though my heart throbbed and burnt with feverish anxiety, I began to scrutinize her. First surveying her whole person, then taking feature by feature, I thoroughly examined her face. The scrutiny was extremely painful; but I faithfully performed it. But the result was startling; I had well nigh jumped to my feet and betrayed my presence. I could no longer conceive how ever I had been able to think that Martin was her exact image in features. There was some resemblance, perhaps; yes, that was evident. But neither in the *tout ensemble*, nor in individual features, did Martin and Anna resemble each other, except in regard to what might be ascribed to chance.

This discovery went to my heart with the

full force of conviction, and gave me such relief as I had never before experienced in Hell. Never yet had I felt the equal of that repose I found for the moment in the mire of that river's bank.

I continued my examination of her. It was now more of a pleasure than a pain to me. Every fresh observation strengthened my conviction. Certainly Martin did not resemble her, at least but very little! But, who was she like? All at once it struck me that she was most extraordinarily like some one or other. But who was that other?

My tranquillity lasted but a short time; again I became hot and cold, and terribly agitated. I began to ponder and meditate, and was at once in the very midst of all my torture again. With a sudden shock it struck my heart; it was not Martin that was like Anna, but Martin's sweetheart; that fair young girl on whom I had cast my last amatory glance in the world; whom I had picked up from the street; but who had preferred the street with Martin to a palace with me.

It was impossible to mistake; the longer I looked the more express did the resemblance become. And Martin's secret, which he said would clear up everything between us,

was quite satisfactorily explained, on the supposition that the wench was my daughter, as the boy was my son. Truly, had it only come to light that the girl was my daughter, everything would have been clear between us!

A fresh horror seized me! Well might I shudder! Again it stood out before me, that the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children. Now I understood why that young girl had excited my dullening passions.

It was the unhallowed lust of youth, awakened by a resemblance that had started to life once more.

The girl was my daughter; there could scarcely be a doubt of it. How nearly had I been committing a crime against nature, at which even depravity itself would stand aghast! My own daughter!

Gracious God! what abominable consequences can sin drag along in its train!

I writhed in agony. I could bear it no longer. There she sat before me; dark, staring fixedly, devoid of all sympathy, like inexorable fate. She held my life in her hand, as I once had held hers. But two words from her lips, and I should be freed from the murdering agony of this uncertainty.

But she had not even a word for me. Her will was no longer mine. Once she had fol-

lowed after me, wherever I went, though it was to her downfall. Now she flies from me; even if I could direct her on the road to Heaven, I believe she would not follow me.

When I look back on my past life, it is an impenetrable gloom. But numberless lights gleam forth from the darkness, great and small, from heaven and from earth. I am thinking now mostly of the first, the numerous tokens in my sinful life of God's fatherly compassion. Like star after star on the dark sky, they peer forth from my doleful meditations.

I see now how near God was to me, and how time after time He strove to bring me to my senses, to warn me, to move me, to draw me to Himself by His benefactions.

More gentle, more patient, more long-suffering love cannot be imagined than that which God has shown to wretched me. But that same love (take heed to this, all of you who still have your eyes open) He shows to all men, though under widely diverse conditions.

But I regarded it not, or else threw it quickly aside; therefore death has become to me the darkness of perdition, and I have been cast out, where alone, by the memory of time

misused, and love abused, is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It is true, occasionally I allowed myself to be really moved. God's hand from on high was too plain, and the blessing it conferred too great to escape my notice. For the moment I could have kissed, could have wept over that blessed hand. My heart was soft, and stirred to the depths. If my penitence was feeble, still my good intentions were firm. And I thought I never, never could forget how good God had been towards me.

But I did forget it altogether; forgot purposes, emotions, benefactions, even God Himself. It was not thoughtlessness alone; I wished to forget. So thoroughly did I forget it, that when I found myself in distress and pain once more, it never occurred to me to whom I should apply for help and compassion.

Truly, let me acknowledge it as loudly as I can, the fault does not rest with God, that I did not come out of all the perils of my earthly life as a saved, as a happy soul.

That story about the Good Shepherd who has such love towards the flock, that He is ready to give even his own life for it, is as touching as it is simple. And each separate sheep is as dear to Him as if it were His whole flock. When one sheep goes astray, He leaves

all the rest to seek after the lost one; and He does not cease to seek for it till He has found it. And when He has found His sheep again, He carries it back in His arms, rejoicing.

So, when I look back on the time that is past, it is just as if one had sought after me my whole life through, with all the aching grief of love. And I was often, ah, how often found! But again and again, I tore myself away to pursue my own wild ways. So at last I could not but be irretrievably lost.

I scarcely had known a day's illness since I had grown up to man's estate; to the very last my constitution seemed as if it would bid defiance to infirmity of all kinds. The worst indisposition I ever experienced was a weakness of the eyes, which necessitated my keeping indoors for some weeks, in a nearly dark room. It was a wearisome time for me; not only tedious, but I might say an awful time. It gave me a very good idea of what the solitary system in prison must be. For there is no greater torture than to be alone when the heart is full of evil remembrances. Night and day seemed to be one; and it was not only that the darkness appeared to be ever growing thicker, but that I was ever sinking deeper and deeper into it. And yet this darkness was but a trifle to that in which I am now

sitting. At that time I thought it so awful; but it was nothing, literally nothing! Darkness like that would be actual light and bliss now.

I had plenty of friends; but still my visitors were few and far between. It was not every one who cared to come and sit by me in the dark, and exert himself to amuse me in my cross, peevish humour.

So there I sat, for the most part quite alone; and yet not alone, for we were two. My other better self sat by my side. It was long since I had had opportunity to converse with it. It had been, properly speaking, altogether absent from me. Now it was sitting by me; no, not by me, but opposite, face to face with me. The darkness was no impediment to us two. I cannot say that I was particularly pleased with my company; but I was forced to bear it. It had only come there to reproach me; so we jangled away, and never had peace.

In every individual there are naturally two such persons, and they cannot be made one, brothers though they be, twins in fact, resembling Castor and Pollux. It is not because there is any lack of natural affection between them; such affection is at hand, but it only finds expression under quarreling and strife. This duality in mankind is a characteristic

mark of sin; could it be done away with, then sin and its unhappy consequences would exist no longer. And that it can be done away with, I learnt even in those dark days.

As I said, we jangled and squabbled together, and there was no possibility of our coming to a mutual understanding. There is nothing more obstinate or more persistent than this better self. It would not give up one iota, but demanded of me that I should give up everything; that I should deny myself, even to the death, in order to be one with it. I neither could, nor would do so. And yet I could have done it.

But I soon discovered that there were not two, but three persons present. Besides us two that were always quarreling, was a third one, who acted as mediator between us, and was full of love and earnestness. I could gainsay my own self; but against him I had naught to say. I felt that he had right on his side in everything. I felt, too, that through him I could come to an understanding with myself, be at one with myself, and begin a new and a better existence. I knew who the mediator was, not a mediator between me and myself alone, but between me and God. It was God's own Son, once born in the flesh.

I was quite in His power. In that dark

corner, whence there was no possibility of escape, the Good Shepherd had at length found His poor stray lamb. Already He was holding it in His arms. But it was only He that willed; I, in truth, would not will. It was only with reluctance that I submitted to His embrace; there was something in me that was but watching for a fitting opportunity to escape.

And this opportunity was not long wanting; it never is, when the fool in us is ever on the look out to seize it. The Evil One, which had by no means yet given up its claim to me, only needed to make a very trifling discovery.

He discovered a game which could be played in the dark. He gave one of my friends the credit of the invention, and brought him to me. Naturally I received him with open arms, not only as a friend, but as a deliverer. What a splendid invention was this game of hazard! doubly interesting, because it could be played, yes, could only be played properly in the dark!

And we set to work to play, I and my friend;—no, I and the Evil Friend. My opponent was in reality no less a person than the Prince of Darkness himself. And the stakes! I did not know it then, but I know it now. The stakes were nothing less than my eternal welfare! Naturally I was the loser!

One blessed evening hour on the waves of the Mediterranean comes so vividly to my recollection. The day had been oppressively sultry; but towards evening a gentle breeze sprung up from the north-west. The air once more became exhilarating, and poured in fresh balmy streams over the deck. The waves once more gently rippled, and a light froth appeared on their crests; the dolphins gambolled around the vessel.

The sun had just set in all its splendour; and the western horizon was refulgent with streaks of red and gold over the Ionian Sea.

The twilight would come on apace, and the glorious spectacle would soon fade. It was but for a moment, but the loveliness of it was beyond description. On the left of us was the enchanting Isle of Cythera, over which the mountain ranges of Maina reared their lofty peaks, and dark shadows, with imposing solemnity. There formerly was Sparta. On the right of us lay Crete, and Mount Ida, whose snow-capped summit, glittering in the roseate hues of evening, seemed to pierce the clouds.

At last Lili and I were for a while alone. It was seldom our good fortune to have the deck to ourselves. Her loveliness, her gentle, graceful bearing had enthralled every soul on board, and every one who could gain admit-

tance to her neglected no opportunity of paying her homage. This circumstance led me to make a very remarkable discovery with respect to myself. I had a strong tendency towards jealousy, but I could not be jealous of Lili, though she was the dearest I had ever known on earth. Impatient, vexed I might be at all this intrusion, which Lili submitted to with such good humour, but I never felt jealous for a single moment.

We were alone, then. But those precious moments seemed as if they would pass away unprofited by. Lili was sitting leaning back, with her hands pressed on her bosom, perfectly still, while, with an absent look in her eyes, she was gazing on the Morean coast. My attention was, as it were, divided between the imposing panorama around me and a little object not less imposing: it was a ringlet of dark hair, which the wind was toying with in the most loving manner on her rounded shoulder. But this pleasant survey was suddenly interrupted. It seemed to me as if Lili were drawing her breath irregularly and heavily, and when I looked in her face there was a striking expression there. It was not only as if a paleness were contending with a rosy blush for the ascendency, but as if a struggle full of anxieties was going on within.

I forcibly repressed my own anxiety, and asked, "What is the matter, Lili?"

"I do not know," she answered, after a deep-drawn breath. "My heart all at once became so uneasy, and I felt myself so oppressed. But do not worry yourself, my friend; I am better now."

And she really seemed to be better. I took hold of her hand, and we sat together some time in silence. The night was coming on apace; it was a heavenly night. The coasts were fading away from view like grey shadows; only a faint gleam here and there still lingered on Ida's summit. The stars broke out in myriads on the dark sky, and were reflected on the sea below.

"What are you thinking of my own Lili?" I asked, as I gently pressed her warm hand.

"Do you wish to know, Otto?" she answered softly, as she laid her other hand involuntarily in mine; "then I will tell you a little story which has just occurred to me."

And Lili proceeded to tell it.

"There was once a poor man, to whom his pious parents had only bequeathed a good, honourable name, and a devout, God-loving heart—a great legacy in itself, but of little value in the world's eyes.

"At first things went on very well, but presently they began to turn out badly. First, he lost his hardly-gotten gains. People pointed at him and said: 'Look at the wretched man!'

"'Not wretched yet,' he answered; 'God is my consolation!'

"But misfortunes continued to follow him. Most of his friends deserted him, and the few who did remain betrayed him. He was cheated, slandered, universally misjudged.

"People shook their heads at him and said: 'You must confess now that you are a miserable person?'

"'Not yet,' he answered gently, and his voice trembled; 'God is my comfort.'

"Next he suffered the greatest, the severest of all: he lost his beloved wife, and shortly after his only child. In his old days he stood quite alone in the world, poor and utterly helpless.

"Then people shrugged their shoulders and said: 'It is of no use for you to deny it any longer; you are certainly a very miserable man.'

"'No, my friends, not yet,' he answered, as he forced his tears back; 'God is my comfort!'

"So people found there was nothing to be

got out of him, and knew no better than to give him the nickname, 'Paul Comfort.'

"But he never became really miserable. The very last words he ever spoke were, 'God is my comfort!'

"So he went to Heaven."

Did she love me? This question is constantly recurring to me. Very likely you will think that it must be a matter of indifference to me now; but it is not. Here there is nothing; we must content ourselves with what has been; and unless I greatly deceive myself it would be an indescribable comfort to me to know that I had been loved by her. But in Hell there is no such thing as comfort of any sort; that is just the desperate thing about it. It will never be clear to me; I shall never know.

I have gone over and over again our relationship to each other from beginning to end. At one time I think it is so, at another I think the reverse; it is and it remains doubtful. In itself it is by no means probable that she would ever have come to love me, whom she had known from her very childhood, and whom she would look on rather as a brother, an elder brother. Our ages, too, were an obstacle; I was a great deal older than she was. Neither

was it likely that one whose gaze had been turned upwards to Heaven from her earliest years would ever have bound her soul to such a clod of earth as I was. And then, moreover, she died so young, in the happy age of ideality.

But spite of all this, when I call to mind the tenderness with which she clung to me; her unrivalled attachment in small things as well as in great; the gentle but powerful glow which often streamed forth from her being in her relations with me; next, when I reflect that I was almost the only young man she had ever known, and how much I was to her, I may say everything; how I was the uncontrolled master of her being and destiny, it appears to me to be impossible but that she must have loved me; not with my love, naturally not with that, but with her own, with that divine unimpassioned love which had so often moved me in my intercourse with her, but which never could find an abiding dwelling-place in my heart.

Did she then love me? What answer shall I give? This much is certain, she never learned to love any else. From the pains of jealousy I was at least free, and am so still.

What I never can forget is, that on her dying bed she evidently had something on her

mind; something which resembled a woman's full, holy love. She struggled to get it forth; it played, as it were, on her lips; but she could not utter it. It was not ripe yet; it died with her, as the unborn child dies with its mother. What was it that made her heart so glowing warm, so zealous to the last? What was it, then, if it was not love?

Did she love me, then? Yes, or no? Ah! it is in vain that I perplex myself with this question. I must admit I cannot say. Never in her whole life had she any secret from me. If she did love me, then, it was her only secret, a secret quite as much from herself as from me, and she took it with her to the grave.

Those last days I spent in Bethlehem stand before me as a dream, though sleep scarce once visited my eyelids.

After numberless difficulties we had been directed to a little, lonely house in a corner within the cloister wall. It was an uncomfortable room, but we had brought many conveniences with us, and with money procured still more. There she lay on her last couch; in the subdued light that fell from a high, but narrow bow-window, pale as a lily, lovely even in death, to the very last moment. And

as her pallor increased, her dark eyes became more brilliant. It was just as if the star that once had stood over Bethlehem was shining through them. It was not that wan pallor which death paints on the sunken, stiffened features; it was that pure, transparent paleness, to which no better name than glorification can be given, which bears witness against death more than do even the rosiest cheeks. She had not time to waste away; she died in the fulness and beauty of youthfulness.

Night succeeded day, and day succeeded night, without our noticing it; time was for us no more. The convent bells rung almost incessantly in our ears. They caused me an indescribable pain; it was as if they were insisting on my giving up my loved one's life. But otherwise no one troubled themselves about us. The Prior sent us some consecrated palms. I was grateful for them, for they seemed to please Lili. I fastened them over the head of the bed.

Her strength rapidly failed, and she became more and more restless. She wanted constantly to be moved, and to be turned in her bed. She had not strength enough to do it herself; so I had to take her in my arms as a little child. Ah! it was the first time since she had grown up, that I had ever presumed thus to embrace

her. But when I thus took her in my arms, and lifted her up, she would involuntarily throw her arms round my neck. Oh, how loving! But how late this love came! I could not restrain my tears; they trickled down upon her face.

"My friend," she said, and she smiled like an angel on me—that sweet, unearthly smile still makes my heart throb. "My friend, you are weeping, while I am smiling. I feel no pain, and soon I shall be perfectly happy. It is only this restlessness which disquiets me. I long—and it seems to me now as if I have longed all my life long—after that eternal home with God, where there is joy and peace without end. I shall soon be there, without you, Otto, but only for a brief while. We shall meet again, never more to part."

Her voice had nearly failed her, and her breathing was difficult. Her words fell like spirit whispers on my ear, at broken and irregular intervals.

"My friend," she resumed, after a lengthened pause, "oh, how sweet and pleasant it has been to me to call you thus! Otto, I may tell you now, a great, yes, the greatest part of my life have I lived in this name. But there was a depth in it which I was never able to exhaust, how ever kind I was towards you. I felt so

often that you deserved a greater, a better love than I had to offer you. And yet I have passed my happiest hours in pondering over the full import of that precious name. There always seemed to me to be something which was lacking to make my happiness complete. But I never found it out. But yonder with God, Otto, we shall lack nothing more, when we call each other by that lovely name, 'My friend! my friend!'"

At last her restlessness increased to such a degree, that, no matter what her position, she could find no rest on her couch. I had then to take her up in my arms, and sit with her upon the edge of the bed. With her head resting on my bosom, she found rest at last.

I sat there with her, hour after hour. God alone knew my suffering. She did not stir, her eyes were closed; I could only tell that she was still alive by her irregular breathing, and by her feeble, intermittent pulse. I sat with her hand in mine (alas, it was already cold!), and observed the beating of her pulse with breathless anxiety. It was as if my very life depended on that beating. Oh, what a deplorable, quivering life! Her hand grew ever colder and colder; it became more difficult to distinguish the beating of her pulse. Soon, soon, it must all be over!

And it was soon! All at once she opened her eyes wide, and with an unearthly, beaming glance, she caught my darkened gaze, and whispered the words:

"My friend!"

It was rather a gasp than a whisper. But I heard and understood it. Quite beside myself, I pressed a hallowed kiss upon her brow.

Once more she moved her lips; but no sound reached my ears. As if by inspiration it recurred to my memory what she once had told me about the sign of the cross, and that it had always given her peace. Involuntarily I made the sign of the cross upon her breast.

A smile lightened up her face, a reflected ray of glory from the kingdom of Heaven. It was but a glimmer. Her eyes closed, a slight tremor, and she was gone. It was a corpse now that rested in my arms.

Then my composure was at an end; she it was who, as if by supernatural means, had alone sustained me. I became raging mad with grief. But of that let me be silent!

CHAPTER XXV.

It is long since I wrote you a letter. Many a time have I taken my pen in hand, but have let it fall again. I could not describe to you what I have undergone; and yet my heart is so heavy, so oppressed. I must speak out; I must make you my *confidant*, as far as I can.

Listen then to what I have to say in my distress:

Quickly the awful moment was approaching, ever more quickly. The abyss was gulping down the murky gloom in deep-drawn mouthfuls. A blush, like the morning dawn, broke forth in the infinite distance yonder side the pit. I knew that there lay the land of bliss. Quickly the brilliancy spread higher and higher, in colours of an unknown, nameless loveliness. Only in dreams, or from some sweet music, can men at times form an idea of such magnificence.

Everything was resting in Hell, or rather everything was centred on one thought, as far as Hell extended. Millions of eager beings

were turning their steps in the same direction. Some stood stiff, like pillars of salt, and stared into the heightening glow; others had sunk down on their knees, while others again lay upon their faces; but there were also those who defiantly turned away. I was standing, trembling nervously among the first, and had forgotten everything else around me. In a moment it was as if a curtain or covering was rent asunder, and all-powerful streams of light poured through it, as if the whole universe were in flames. A smothered sigh sounded through Hell from the millions of millions of lost souls; and I was conscious of nothing more. As if stricken by lightning, I fell on my face to the ground.

How long I lay thus, dazzled and stunned, I do not know; only some few fleeting moments, perhaps. When I had come to myself again, the light had become steady and soft; little by little I weaned myself to it, and was able to look into it without being blinded by the glare. For a long while I saw nothing; but as I continued to stare, convinced that there must be something to see, a whole world of infinity dawned upon my sight, in inconceivable, incredible magnificence. Yes, I must say incredible, though I did not doubt it for a moment. I knew that it was the land of bliss;

that it was Paradise that was expanding itself to my gaze. First it seemed as if islands and extensive coasts rose up from that sea of light, bathed in soft and brilliant colours; but little by little these dispersed parts united into one, and formed a whole of such enormous extent, that even the world itself seemed to be but a tiny spot in comparison to them. But great though this new world was, it formed but one single place, a delightful, charming garden, blessed beyond all comprehension and bounds. Even the loveliest places on earth are, comparatively, but as dwellings of misery. More I cannot say. I must be an angel if I could.

Ah, you know what I am!—God be praised, not a devil. Only a poor wretched soul, that sees destruction before it.

Fascinated, and at the same time cut to the heart, I gazed into Paradise, over thousands and thousands of miles. Yes, wondrous as the spectacle was, equally marvellous were the powers of my vision. My spirit seemed to roam through all the celestial regions, and dwell on every spot. Nothing escaped my ecstatic and awakened senses. I felt the mild balmy breezes, the gentle rustling of the trees, the rippling of fountains, as my spirit paused a moment in its flight, or passed them by. The luxuriant fruit; every tiny flower; aye,

every dewdrop on the grass, attracted my admiration. I saw, heard, and felt. There was music everywhere in this heavenly place. No drop of water fell, not a leaf stirred, not a flower opened its petals, without an accompanying and melodious sound; and all these sweet notes formed one ravishing harmony. As yet I could not see a single living being, though shouts of joy, and songs of triumph, sounded on my ear from all parts: nature and spirit united in chanting a hymn of blissfulness. This infinite bliss, this perfect happiness and peace which everything breathed forth, went to my heart with a thousand transports; alas! only to cause me a thousand remorseful stings.

At this hour I first rightly understood what it is to long. How my soul stretched itself out over one expanse of a thousand miles after the other! It was unutterably painful. Have you ever heard speak of the bed of Procrustes? If so, you can form some idea of my agony. But I could not do else than long; I could not but stretch out my hands after my lost salvation. Eden lay before me; I was there, and yet I was not there. Out of all this splendour there was not a beam of light, not a drop of water, no, not so much as a flower or a leaf for me! Oh, thou everlast-

ing Mercy, only one drop of water—only a single tear!

But where, then, were the countless crowds of blessed spirits? As yet I had not seen a single one. Eden's garden seemed as empty as on that day when Adam and Eve were driven out of it.

I felt myself all at once possessed with a burning regret. Oh! my beloved, never-to-be-forgotten ones, whither are ye gone, if ye are not here? My soul seemed to cry after them. First, my thoughts fell upon Aunt Betty. Why first on her I cannot explain: there was yet another who stood in much closer relationship to my soul.

But at the same moment I saw her before me. Unconsciously I stretched out my arms, and rushed forward. Ah! there is a longer space between torment and Paradise than there is between Hell and the world; and, what is more, there is a yawning gulf between them, so that none can pass from one side to the other.

But I saw her before me, my dear Aunt Betty, as plainly as if there had been but an arm's length between us. It was her to the life, and yet how changed! She was transfigured into an everlasting youthfulness and loveliness. Her beauty was as free from stain and as perfect as the white shining garment

in which she was clothed. Under the gentle influence of happy thoughts, she was wandering along a luxuriant path, on which not a stone was to be found against which she could strike her foot. A heavenly peace was spread over her beloved face. The smile that played about her eyes, and over her lips, revealed to me what her feelings were, and how happy she was.

She had overcome everything, yes, everything! Not so much as a shadow of sorrow or of woe remained behind.

I could have wept bitterly at this moment. Ah, how often could I not have done so? But my heart remained arid and burning hot, spite of all its emotion; the fount of blessing was quite dried up. All that my Aunt Betty had been to me, all her love, and the sacrifices she had made, came into my thoughts. And now I first thoroughly understood her.

For—and this is the strangest of all—not only did I see her before me, but I could see into her inmost thoughts. Everything that she had gone through in spirit, all that had occurred, all her sufferings and struggles, lay open before me, as an account that has been balanced.

Yes, now I understood her! Once, when she was young, my father had stood by her side in some severe trial; in his love she

had found an asylum in a desert world. She could never forget it. In return for this she had determined to sacrifice to him the remainder of her life. That was the key to her life, as far as I had learnt to know it. And she had remained faithful to her purpose to the very end. But it was not my father alone that had benefited by these sacrifices, but numberless others. Among these others I came nearest to him.

My father; Lili! Simultaneously my thoughts reverted to these dear ones; and at the same instant they emerged out of the shady grove, and appeared before me.

At the sight of Lili I was nearly beside myself. My senses were in a whirl; I became giddy. It was as if my eyesight were failing me. But it did not fail, for these beloved forms appeared to my gaze with perfect distinctness and calmness. Not a feature, either without or from within, escaped my notice. I could with reason say, that I had never known, never seen them properly till this hour.

Oh, Lili! Even when in the world, she had always appeared to me to wear a crown of imperishable beauty. But Lili now, and Lili then, bore the same relation to each other as day does to night. Such a perfect, beaming,

transparent loveliness has never been vouchsafed to mortal eye to behold, nor to human fantasy to picture. Holy, holy! it sounded over to me from each separate feature, from each bend of her form, from the crown on her brow to the palm-bough in her hand, from every fold in her white garment. When she raised her beaming eyes upwards, their glances met mine, and they flickered and glowed like a flame in the wind. And that angelic, hallowed smile which accompanied them seemed to be intended for me alone.

But it was mere illusion! None from yonder side can see over here. God be thanked for it! She was near, quite near to me, as I longed in the spirit and stretched across all boundaries. But I was far, far off from her. For she too surely longed, but not over the abyss, not in the direction of Hell's torments!

But I was not far from her thoughts, from her heart. Oh, woe, woe! Shall I howl in despair, or sing for joy? Now I could read in her righteous heart, as in an open book. And I read—written there in clear characters it stood—that with all her soul she really had loved me. She had, unknown to herself, loved me with a deep, holy, maidenly love. She loved me still. She wore me in her heart; I was never out of her thoughts; she

longed so inwardly and yet so painlessly after me. It was on my side, on this side of the yawning pit, that all the pain was.

What shall I say? Despair is a customary, an every-day occurrence. It is like an ever-burning lamp within me. Now it flares up, now it flickers down, but never is extinguished. At this moment æther was poured into my lamp; enchantment came to despair, you may imagine with what effect. High aloft blazed up the flame, and spread over my wretched being. I dissolved, as it were, in flames!

"See—see—how much you have lost!" was the incessant cry within my breast. Can you wonder if I scarce noticed my father, my pious, good father, by her side; that I cannot recall one of the soft, gentle words my loved ones interchanged with each other? Possibly I might have heard my name mentioned with ineffable love. But I saw and heard nothing more after I had seen Lili, and had discovered that she loved me. I was a defenceless prey to despair. In vain I struggled, if only to catch another glimpse of her! Quite beside myself, I sank to the ground.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SINCE you last heard from me, and that is a long time ago, I have been on a long and marvellous journey.

It is impossible to speak with any certainty as to the distances one accomplishes, or the speed with which one travels. I cannot but suppose that both are inconceivably great. But the fact is that time and space are but illusions to us, however real their existence may be. This, however, is not peculiar to time and space alone; it may be said of everything else. Everything depends upon the conception. Therefore unity is one of the accidental rarities of Hell; and what is termed harmony in the world and elsewhere is not to be found here. It is quite beside the question if a number of souls under the influence of some strong instinctive impulse do unite here and there, in the pursuit of one common object or idea. For freedom is essential to unity; but these souls act merely under necessity; they

do what they are obliged to do; and if this instinctive impulse could be removed they would be mutually as much at variance as the others.

Enough then to say that I was compelled to undertake this journey. When I feel myself utterly miserable I find a kind of desperate pleasure in darting off like an arrow through infinite, trackless space, as if I were blind, without any aim or object.

My only aim is to hurry wildly along; yes, exactly as if I were blind, for I respect no obstacles. I go right through the thickest walls; the most crowded mob; through houses, churches, palaces; yes, even through human beings and animals if they get in my way. Of course it creates some confusion; but people are quite used to that sort of thing here. They know that it is nothing but a desperate soul, and they quickly recover their composure as if nothing had occurred.

"How can you have a liking for it?" perhaps you exclaim.

Yes, you may well ask! I do not know myself how I can like it. Every one here has his natural place, and it is best for him to remain in it. I have mine; and, as you know, I lead what one might very nearly call the steady, respectable life of a citizen. But now and

then an ecstasy comes over me, and then farewell to all respectability and to all good old habits. I am off on a wilder flight than ever wild goose set out in the world.

What really lies at the bottom of these fits of ecstasy? Despair, you say, utter despair. Yes, naturally! But in despair, a natural feeling of constraint that we must fly from one's self, or at all events find stupefaction, makes itself felt.

But I can neither do the one nor the other. In the world, the attempt may at times succeed, but never, never here. When then I have again and again learnt this useless experience, I suddenly leave off and look around me, and frequently find myself in very strange places.

But the most wonderful place of all is the very one from which I have just come. As a fool I went thither, as a fool I returned. Horror drove me thither, and horror drove me home; and now I am sitting here again, as you may have remarked, more than half-deranged.

There is a passage to a definite goal, which doubtless every soul in Hell has undertaken at least once. This journey might be termed a pilgrimage. Whether it has its origin in a peculiar irresistible impulse that is common to

all, or whether it may simply be ascribed to the marvellous attractive influence that the horrible exercises over souls, all must away, sooner or later. You know what a mob is wont to congregate at an execution in the world! It is wonderful. But would it not be much more wonderful still if a person felt himself irresistibly impelled to attend his own execution? Well, something similar to this takes place here.

As you are aware, even without my telling you (for doubtless my information has been but imperfect), there is an immense abyss between the place of torment and Paradise. Immense I call it; I might also add fearful, if this word, coined only for earthly objects, were not too weak to pourtray the horrors of this pit. It is the Devil's corner. Do you understand now? An eternal fire is burning down in its depths, prepared for the Devil and his angels.

How far off is this pit? I can say nothing to that, except that it lies at the furthermost end of Hell.

And how near can one come to it? At a distance even of a hundred miles a feeling of deathly giddiness comes on, and still one is drawn nearer and nearer to it.

And what is the width of the pit? When the splendid brilliancy of Paradise is beheld

one can readily see across it; but I am much mistaken if even the great ocean in the world would not fail in comparison with it.

From this abyss that terrible darkness pours forth that gradually takes the light away from us, and swallows it again in turn. Then it becomes lighter and lighter, till the splendour of Paradise again bursts forth triumphantly. But I do not really know why I am telling you this. What I actually had to say is merely this, that now the awful moment with all its horrors has passed, and I have still strength left to despair. The light sensibly diminishes; night is coming on once more.

But we were at the pit. You expect, perhaps, that I am going to describe the place to you. You might as well ask me to give you a description of Paradise, as of the horrors of this pit. I should lose my senses altogether; I should rave, however sober I may be, were I to attempt to do so.

Just as little may you expect to hear what one's feelings are on the brink of this place of perdition. Yet stay!

In order to satisfy your curiosity in a very slight way, let me tell you that more than one rich man stands by the pit, and sees the poor man on yonder side in Abraham's bosom, and stretches forth his arms as he begs for a drop of water. For he is in bitter torments!

That first rich man in the Gospel, it is said, has been released!

And I, too, have begged, with all the energy of despair, but no one has heard me. Fain would I have plunged into the pit, among that howling devil's crew below. What power held me back, and what power led me away, I do not know.

What if there were still a compassionate God watching over me?

It was my second pilgrimage to the country near the yawning pit. I am sitting here now, and thinking how ever I could have found any delight in making it. But here we have no control over our whims and passions. I shudder, I shudder! The whim might seize me a third time!

I see I have written in order to satisfy you in some measure. It was almost a promise, and promises, especially small ones, which it has not been difficult to keep, I always considered to have something sacred about them. I must then conquer my own feelings, and tell you a little more yet. But I warn you beforehand, the revelations I have to make are not adapted for weak souls, that esteemed a good, peaceful slumber beyond everything else in the world.

When I was rushing back in heedless alarm from the pit, as if I had escaped from Satan

and his angels, how I do not know, I was nearly rushing into the arms of an individual who was coming towards me. But could that shapeless form, with its crushed, torn body, and hideously-contorted features, be a human being? Yes, indeed it was, and one readily recognised from the description that has been given of it. The name of this person was Judas Iscariot.

Around his neck he wears a noose, that has been broken asunder; in his hand he bears the thirty pieces of silver. The noose chafes him terribly round the neck; the pieces of money burn his hand. Often he throws them away from him, but they always return. Each time they make a little round patch on the world, and then lie once more, bloody as they are, in his clenched hand. Thereupon one hears him moan:

"What is that to us? See thou to that!" A fruitless repentance, which in reality is no repentance, occupies his entire conscience, and he has only one aim, namely, to come behind some person or other, and hang around his neck.

What his intention thereby is, is not quite clear. Some think that he really means hanging himself; that he will do over again, and do better, what he failed to do in the world. It is, doubtless, a misconception! But certainly

it has never appeared what terrible thing would happen were he to succeed in hanging himself round another person's neck; but, at all events, I do not think it could be Judas who would stand in danger of being strangled. But, in the opinion of others, the matter is supposed to resolve itself into this, that Judas is simply searching for some Christian person who can restore him the kiss he once gave his Lord and Master, and rid him of the thirty pieces of silver. But of course he can find no one. As may well be imagined, there is no one who will wait for his embrace and kiss. All fly from him with unmentionable horror, and, fortunately, it is not difficult to escape from him.

I, too, fled away, but not far, for I was obliged to stop. A fearful sight presented itself! Again I asked myself, "Can that, too, be a human being?"

Yes, indeed it was, wasted away to the very bones. A living skeleton, not the less a phenomenon here than it would be in the world. I learnt who it was at a later period. It was that fellow among the servants of the High Priest, that smote God's Son on the mouth.

His history is shortly as follows:

The hand wherewith he smote the Lord began immediately to shrivel up and wither.

away. And so he continued to wither slowly away, inch by inch, from his outer parts to his heart. At last there was nothing left but skin and deformed bones. And thus he wandered about, an object of terror to all persons. He felt how death was slowly, but surely, stealing upon him. It was a long, long time ere it reached his heart. His life became one continuous dread of death. Each day, as it came, he feared would be his last. But day succeeded day, year followed upon year, and still there was no end.

But an end came at last, not to his suffering, but to his earthly life. He died and went to Hell. Here he suffers the same agony of soul, inasmuch as he is possessed by the horrible fancy that he is still ever dwindling and withering away. He asks everybody, just as he used to do in the world, whether they can see any alteration in him.

Under this idea he lives and breathes, and walks quietly about in order to spare his diminishing strength. We do not fear him; one cannot but shudder at him. Whenever he speaks, it is generally to ask that anxious, breathless question. Only now and then he whispers to himself,

"*Why smotest thou me?*" and looks down at his withered right hand.

The other day I happened to tread upon a piece of newspaper. I took it up and read:

"TRY YOUR FORTUNE!

"For twelve coppers, a prize of 400 dollars may be won!"

It was one of the customary baits that are thrown out to the inexperienced and the covetous, and which, after having served their purpose, naturally come to Hell.

But I have made it a rule never to throw away a piece of paper like this, without first looking to see what is on the opposite side. The wrong side, which, naturally out of Hell, is the right one, frequently contains the best part; something which was never intended to be read in Hell, but which the mysterious and necessary connection between right and wrong has strangely brought along with it.

The wrong side of the piece of paper in question contained a little advertisement that ran as follows:

"Bridal wreaths and funeral garlands constantly in stock in large variety.

"Names and elegant farewells well and cheaply prepared."

O, what serious, painful considerations these innocent lines gave rise to!

Bridal wreaths and funeral garlands by the

side of each other! Yes, unfortunately it is, but quite correct. There are, in fact, only but some few quivering breaths, some few moments of toil, struggling and pain, between them. They lie so close beside each other, that in our attempts to lay hold of the one we often grasp the other; we seat ourselves down to weave a bridal wreath, and it becomes a funeral garland in our hands.

Many a mother and father bring up the child of their heart for the bridal wreath; but the funeral garland comes first, and adorns the head of their precious one. She lies there with the white roses encircling her virgin temples. But 'tis no bridal chaplet! She needs not to blush; she is as pale as the roses that deck her. The bridal chaplet is laid up in store for her in Heaven—in so far as she has learnt to know the bridegroom of the soul, God's only begotten Son—the unfading crown of eternal life. And many a woman would fain rather have a funeral garland on her head than a bridal wreath. Rather become pale under that, than burn under this! Rather death for a bridegroom, than a husband who is totally undeserving of love.

And these names which are so excellently and so cheaply executed! How ever well they be done, they will soon moulder away, and none will be able to read them. Ah! it is but too

often the case—dead persons are soon forgotten. The dead have no longer any rights. The world goes on unmoved, undisturbed in its accustomed way; life has its claims to which the demands of death must humbly give way. Life is the rich man in the Gospel, who fared sumptuously every day. Death is the poor man, that lies in misery at the rich man's door, and must thankfully receive the crumbs that fall from his table. There are exceptions it is true, great exceptions. But in general, the dead man is remembered but a little while; his name is handed over to oblivion, and the names, living names, crowd into the warm, tender heart. How then can there be room there for the dead? No, there is no longer any room for a dead name in the heart. It moulders away on some mouldering church wall, and no one can any longer decipher it; or it wafts sorrowfully to and fro on the grave in the cold wintry winds, as a relic that cannot be recognised from the tender days of love.

And those beautiful farewells that can be had so cheap! Ah, one could weep bitterly at their cheapness!

Farewell! farewell! In the heart of the dead, broken though it be, it will continue to echo, if not with anguish, at least with regret; while

its sound will quickly die away in the hearts of the living. Alas, it was too cheap; it cost so very little! Some fine day, maybe, a total stranger comes to the heart you loved best on earth, and which you never, never will forget, and says to it, "Good day, good day;" and that tender farewell is forgotten altogether. It flutters only as an unhappy shred over the grave.

Oh! but why was it to be got so cheaply? And yet it was so beautiful as it sounded on the lips and to the eye; so lovely, so touching! Where was the fault? Ah, there was no soul in it! It was but a breath from the lungs; the heart had not any share in it. And yet the sorrowing mourner believed it, perhaps. But it is the truth—there was no soul in it. It had stealthily shrunk away into the very innermost recess, there to wait for better and happier times. And they came, and were hailed with joy; the times of loyal forgetfulness.

Then the soul once more raised its head from the depths, with fresh aspirations and yearnings, craving to live amongst the living, and not with the dead. Decay had long since destroyed and wafted away that lovely farewell, which was so beautifully made, and cost so little. There was none to sigh over the

sunken grave now, save the mournful night wind.

Of late everything has merged into one great overwhelming pain. What have I not suffered? Now it appears as if it would disperse, as the saying is. Among others there is one sign, namely, that evil recollections, with remorse of all kinds, once more begin to flow in upon me.

You must not jump at the conclusion that hereafter I shall only be troubled with small griefs. These, indeed, are not worth noticing. My existence is, as it were, divided between many great pains. Among these it is quite conceivable that there may be one which is great even among the greatest. In a forest there may be many large trees, and yet one can tower far above all the others. Well, I have, as it were, been nailed to this great tree in the forest of late. What heed did I give to the other trees? what heed did I pay to the swarms of gnats? Yes, to continue the simile, evil reminiscences are like gnats, that swarm about the open places in the wood.

A beautiful picture, is it not? The pains of Hell compared to a summer day's trip through the wood. Well, then, if you retain this picture, do so! Your friend is wandering

through the wood, and the worst complaint he has to make is——

The gnats. Sting after sting!

I had once taken quite a young man into my service. He was a sort of heirloom from Aunt Betty; that is, it was for her sake I took him. But, God forgive me! how I treated him! I do not know how it was, but I took a dislike to him from the very first. You know it often is so in the world, and one does not attach much weight to that sort of thing. My new servant was, perhaps, a little deficient, but was certainly possessed of a most excellent will. But nothing he could do pleased me. He could not even stand upright, or walk to my mind. Early and late I nagged at him; and I verily believe found a degree of satisfaction in doing so. Every one of the sarcastic, insolent words that I used to him come into my thoughts now, and again and again I can see his sorrowful face. Naturally, he could not bear himself with me, and had to see after another place, which I was good enough to procure for him. But it was not a very encouraging beginning for a poor fellow who would make his way in the world. And he deserved better. After he had left the house more than one or two little touching traits of affection

and fidelity in the poor young fellow who had been so badly treated came to light.

It is but a trifling matter, you see; but it has its sting, and the smart pains.

In town there was a little garden to my house. A neighbour's house fronted it on one side with a blind wall; and yet not quite blind, for some distance down in it there was a window. It seemed like the eye of the house, and I conceived the idea that this eye did not lose sight of me. It was a mere fancy, for behind the window sat a poor sempstress, who had quite enough to do with her work, without spying after me. Of course she looked down into the garden every now and then; and in the morning and evening she even ventured to open her window. There was certainly no harm in this; but for all that I took offence at it. In short, in an angry moment I availed myself of my legal rights, and had some planks nailed up before the offending window.

But this right of mine was a huge wrong. My little garden was one of the greatest blessings that had fallen to this poor girl's lot. There were flowers in it, and she was passionately fond of flowers. There were shrubs in it, and the green colour was so good for her weak eyes. At the back of the garden

was a summer-house formed by lime trees, where a tribe of little birds used to take refuge, and she was so fond of birds, and so pleased to hear their chirping. By placing these planks up in front of the window I had not only deprived her of all these treats, but even of the pure air, aye, of the light itself which was essential to her work.

Before long it struck me that I had been guilty of something which bore some resemblance to cruelty. I let it run round my head and my heart for some time; at last, when I had got a philanthropic scheme duly prepared, I went into my neighbour's. But it was too late. The poor girl had been obliged to leave a house which the joys and sorrows of fifteen years had hallowed and endeared to her.

Another trifle! Not in itself, perhaps, but trifling when compared with the many evil deeds of my life. But, believe me, it scorches my heart now!

I was out riding. In the middle of a village I pulled up, for I wanted to see a man, and was not quite certain as to where he lived. It was midday, and extremely hot; there was not a soul to be seen in the village who could hold my horse except a pretty young peasant girl, who came out from some door. I

beckoned to her, and she came, half archly, half coyly; and without further difficulty held my horse while I went on my errand.

When I returned, a peculiarly pretty and interesting sight was awaiting me. My horse had grown impatient, and the young girl, who could scarcely manage it, was evidently in great perplexity. In her struggles with the refractory animal, the movements of her plump, well-made figure appeared to advantage; there was such a mixture of anxiety and vexation in her pretty face that I felt quite enchanted, and instead of coming forward to help her out of the critical position into which I had brought her, I hid up, so as to be able to watch the *piquant* scene at my leisure. It was a *quasi* pendant to the horse tamers on Monte Cavallo in Rome. The style somewhat lower, perhaps. But here it was the living, fresh beauty of youth; real flesh and blood.

There was no danger! The horse was by no means restive; on the contrary, he was a great pet. There was only one trick he had; but the young lass did not know how to treat it. It was all play. For instance, he would throw up his neck as if about to rear; and in the present case nearly lifted the girl's slim and supple form off the ground. But she kept

a firm hold, and would not give in. It was all play, too, that he snapped now at her neckerchief, now at her hat; and oh, dear! away flew the kerchief, exposing her full white neck and bosom to my gaze. Not long after her back hair fell out from under her hat, and rolled in golden waves over her back and shoulders! Her distress increased. Her cheeks glowed, and an unsteady fire sparkled from her eyes, not very far removed from tears. Her bosom heaved irregularly up and down, as she strove to quiet the animal with breathless words. And as she held on to the bridle it swung her first here and now there. Standing on tiptoe, and with uplifted arms, she was perforce obliged to execute the freest and most graceful movements. I thought I had never seen prettier steps executed than she now made with her neat little feet from under her short waving skirt. It was extremely selfish of me, I grant; but I could not tear myself away from the contemplation of such natural charms.

But matters ended abruptly!

All at once the girl got sight of me, and I was obliged to come forth from my hiding-place. Had she have let go her hold of my horse she would have served me right, I allow. But she kept a firm hold of it till I could take the bridle

in my hand. But that tearful look which she cast upon me; that mingled expression of vexation, injured modesty, and anger! It makes me shrink under it, even now. But before I sprang into the saddle, I placed a piece of money in her hand. She let it fall to the ground, and turned away without even looking to see whether I was following after her.

Now, this again is only a trifling affair! I had treated the girl ill, true; but then she had sustained no harm in any way. On the contrary, I think that this little adventure most probably taught her an excellent lesson, namely, to guard against coxcombs from town.

But for all that, reminiscences such as these must come home to me here, and they will make themselves heard. The law of existence is perfect justice; and this law pervades the world, Hell, and the kingdom of Heaven too. Everything, if it only have a shadow of evil in it, will come home to me some time or other, and demand restitution, and claim an equivalent retribution, unless by God's mercy it be intercepted on the road. Evil in the world insists on a corresponding measure of suffering in Hell.

Cannot you hear how the gnats are swarming and buzzing round me?

There is one tree in the forest beneath which I must stop again and again, and give vent to my deep-drawn sighs. It bears the fruits of a mis-spent life, and they seem to pour down upon me. How I might have enjoyed myself! How much I could have done! How happy I might have been!

But I would not.

While I walked in the light I was blind; and blindly I fell into my grave.

In darkness I see now for the first time!

CHAPTER XXVII.

As I roam through the Holy Land in my memory, the feelings of a pilgrim whose contrite heart is reminded at each place of the Saviour, but nowhere finds forgiveness of sins, come over me. When I actually undertook this journey, peace was offered to me at every place and at every hour; but so taken up was I with vain thoughts, that I paid little heed to it. One of God's saints walked by my side, and had an almost uncontrolled sway over me. Her faith, her piety, breathed incessantly on my soul; often and often I felt myself moved, touched, inwardly exalted; more than once my sinful heart was well nigh giving itself up entirely before the Saviour's feet; her Saviour, who might also be my Saviour too.

But at the critical moment my self-will became alarmed, and, like a flame from Hell, burned within; once more was I blinded, and saw the Saviour no more. I saw only a lovely

young creature by my side, on whom all my anticipations were centred, who was as good as my own already, but over whom I should have to fight the hardest fight of all—the fight with death.

Galilee, beauteous land! I know nothing more enchanting than the contrast between the wild, dark wilderness of Judea, and the bright, fruitful land of Galilee. And I know of no more glorious spot in Galilee than Mount Tabor. I can see it before my eyes. Boldly, and quite alone, it raises up its oblong, conical head from the plain, while its steep sides turn towards all the quarters of the heavens. Up to its very summit it is clothed with wood and thickets, and its evergreen oaks and pine trees vie with each other in magnificence. The whole mountain seems to be strewn with aromatic plants; there is a freshness in the landscape which I have never experienced in any other part of the world.

Only from the south is it accessible. The road winds up the mountain side in graceful bends, at each turn unfolding a new and enchanting picture to the eye. The atmosphere becomes palpably purer and more bracing, and yet more balmy; one seems to breathe in a totally new existence after quitting the

parched-up plain below. It is a long but excellent road; much longer, but at the same time far more lovely, than one could have imagined. And then at last, when the summit is reached, one is astonished to find a plateau fully three miles in circumference, so immense and so lofty is the mountain. This plateau is covered with the loveliest carpeting of grass and with noble trees; while the atmosphere one inhales is almost similar to that on the peaks of the high Alps. The approach to the plain is through a decayed arched gateway towards the west, one of the numberless relics from ancient times. Ruined walls and towers, grottos, and cisterns, ranged in a large circumference, show plainly that here there once had been an entrenched camp, if not a town. In truth, it must be as secure as it is lovely to build and to live here, for a more charming spot could scarce be found in the whole world. Little wonder that Peter thought "it good to be here," and would fain have built lasting dwellings! According to tradition, Tabor is the Mount of the Transfiguration.

The shades of evening were coming on as we approached the mount. It was early in the month of March; but the day had been burning hot. How refreshing it was, as we

wended our way up the mountain, in the cool, balmy shade. It seemed like Paradise! Yet, as for Lili, she had Paradise within her wherever she went.

A little before sunset we reached the summit.

Nothing can be compared to the impression conveyed to the mind, as we suddenly emerged on the open plateau, the prospect from which was unlimited on all sides. We became mute under its powerful influence. The whole of Galilee, yes, even the greatest portion of the Holy Land, lay unfolded to our gaze.

I cast my eyes on Lili; for I had long been in the habit of receiving my best impressions through her. The setting sun threw a warm glow over her delicate features, which seemed transfigured in silent ravishment. There was a loveliness in them greater than earth could impart. Never had I felt this to be the case so strongly or so vividly as at this hour. All the beauty of the landscape, which perhaps was without its equal in the whole world, lay far and wide around me; and yet it was as nothing when compared with that which her beloved face revealed to me.

Oh, my friend, do not be vexed at my dwelling so long on all this! Foolish, it is true; but still natural, and I cannot do other-

wise. It is a part of my torment to recall to memory the happy moments of my life.

To the north we could see far over the heights of Galilee, to the lofty snowy summits of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and to the parts around Damascus. Directly beneath our feet, to the north, west, and south, lay the small towns of Cana, Nazareth, and Nain, with all their hallowed and heart-stirring reminiscences. Towards the west we had the rich, lovely plain of Esdrelon, Mount Carmel, and the wide sea, in which the sun had just sunk down. The little stream Kison wound like a silver stripe through the valley, and guided the vision to the holy mountain springing up from the sea. Towards the east the fair lake of Genesareth, glittering in the evening sun, at once catches the eye. The little town of Tiberias lies on its shores, now, of course, in ruins; Capernaum is not far distant. On the further side is the wide desert where the Lord fed those many thousands. To the south the lonely mount of Hermon first arrests the eye, and next the mountains of Samaria, but they cannot keep it prisoner long. It roves far out to the region round about Jericho and the mountain of the Forty Days, where God's Son fasted and was tempted of Satan; yes, even Jerusalem itself gleams forth at favour-

able moments. It crosses the river Jordan to Bethabara, where John baptized; it exchanges glances with the Dead Sea, to reach Mount Nebo in the land of Moab, where Moses died, and then loses itself in the boundless desert of Arabia. Truly with such a spectacle, glorious beyond human conception, it is not difficult to believe that Tabor was the Mount of the Transfiguration!

The whole scene stands before me with wonderful accuracy and clearness. I could give it an apparent existence if I would.

The sun sank; nay, it fell, as it were, into the sea, flame-coloured; and darkness at once began to set in. But our people, meanwhile, had not been idle. A sheltered spot had been found, and a tent for Lili and my mother had already been pitched; for we had arranged to pass the night on the mountain. The animals had been unsaddled, hobbled, and set at liberty; a fire composed of the fragrant cedar wood was kindled, and the preparations for our simple evening meal were made. All were busily employed, except the Turks, our original escort, who looked on in indolent, voluptuous repose, as they smoked their first evening pipes.

This evening labour, whether in the west or east, in the north or south, has always had a great charm for me! But that evening,

on the mountain of Galilee, was one of the last perfectly happy evenings I have experienced in the world; yes, perhaps it was the very last.

When darkness had quite fallen over us—and, in speaking of darkness, the thought of those myriads of stars that twinkled overhead, not as at home from the blue canopy of Heaven that the eye could pierce, but from a profound impenetrable gloom, that made them shine with ten times their former brilliancy, comes to my mind—when darkness had quite fallen over us we lighted several fires, and arranged the necessary watches. It was not only done for form's sake; for nowhere in the Holy Land is the traveller secure against the Bedouins. But here it was not difficult to make one's self secure. We were in a natural fortress; the mountain was ours.

The lamp was lighted in the tent, within which we passed the last hours of evening in familiar and pleasant talk. Lili read aloud to us the account of the Saviour's transfiguration on the mountain. Nothing was so calculated to calm the tumult in my breast as her sweet voice; in my serious moods it was quite enough to awaken a feeling of religion within me. But it was only as a fleeting puff of wind on some close summer day. My soul soon lay low like

a butterfly that flutters its wings in the dust. It was so at this hour.

"How do you find yourself, Lili?" I asked, as she gave me her hand, and bid me good night.

"I cannot say how well," she answered, with a happy smile. "I feel so happy up here, as if I never could make up my mind to descend again."

I noticed by the pressure of her hand, which still lingered in mine, and by the glance from her eyes, that she had something to say to me yet. I bent down, and she whispered in my ear:

"Do not forget to pray before you go to sleep. The Saviour prayed here for you!"

Another refreshing puff of wind; once more the butterfly fluttered aloft. Moved at heart I left her.

My couch was laid at the entrance to the tent. I wrapped myself up in my burnouse, and laid me down to rest. And yet not to sleep, for first I must pray. But since childhood I had never prayed from the heart. Of late I had often tried to do so; but had always felt that something was wanting; ah! not something only, but the most important thing of all,—that from which prayer must arise and take wing towards Heaven. This evening,

as I set myself to collect my thoughts for prayer, they wandered in all directions, and my soul again became restless and uneasy. I could not pray; it was useless that I strove to do so. Neither could I sleep; for first I had to pray. All was still within the tent; but outside, peace was nowhere to be found. I gazed up into the heavens; the stars seemed so close as if I could have grasped them with my hand. I felt as if the arch of Heaven were crushing me; the boundlessness of the firmament almost terrified me. The strange and varied sounds of night worked on my imagination and excited me. Now it was a wild boar that dashed through the thicket; now it was the distant howl of a jackal from the plain below; or it was one of the Bedouins or Turks talking to himself in strange tones in his slumber.

It was midnight. My watch ticked as loudly in my pocket as any church bell; at least, it appeared so to me. Restlessly I turned once more upon my bed, and fastened my gaze on the dying embers of one of the night fires. While I thus lay still, it was exactly as if Lili's voice were again sounding in my ear, reading to me the Saviour's transfiguration upon the mountain. I saw the Saviour before me, standing between Moses and Elias

in God-like majesty. Then my eyes closed. I had prayed, unknown to myself; my soul had prayed, independently of the will and nature of the flesh. I fell asleep, and slumbered sweetly until break of day.

Dawn was stealing over the heights of Ashtoreth, on the other side of the Lake of Tiberias, as I approached the northern slope. I was standing near some old masonry, buried in deep thought. Presently I noticed that some one was close by me. It was Lili, who had followed on my track without being noticed, and who now gently laid her arm on mine.

United in this way we stood for a few moments in silence; it appeared to me a sacred hour. I believe I threw my arm around her waist. I say, I believe; for if I did, I did it without knowing it.

The sun arose in all his majesty; his first beams shone on our faces, and made the tops and ridges of Mount Carmel glow with fire. It was in the west chiefly that the splendour of the morning displayed itself. Here the wide sea lay extended, and every tiny wave threw back its flash, as day triumphantly broke.

"Otto, it is good to be here!" said Lili, gently, and at the same moment forgot that

she had spoken. Silently I drew my burnous closer round her, for a cold wind was blowing over the mountain.

The valley below was still hidden by mist and fog. But soon a movement might be observed in the gauze-like curtain; it lifted, and spread itself out. Then through a rent in it, a cupola and some white walls peered forth from the depths below. Little by little the rent became wider, and soon the whole of a small town was disclosed to view, like a revelation from another world.

"Nazareth!" exclaimed Lili, with joyful surprise. "Lowly, lowly Nazareth! Here the ends of the world are gathered together: Nazareth and Tabor. Born in the very dust, and under the meanest conditions, He was still the Son of God, and heir to the whole power and majesty of God."

She said only "He," and I did not ask "Who?" It was impossible to mistake. She had but one firm and steadfast thought in the world. To live implies a great deal; therefore not one of the nobler interests of life was strange to her. But life itself, life in her—it was He, and only He.

A last look, and we turned to retrace our steps.

"Here He was transfigured!" she resumed,

as she stood still and gazed around her. "It was not because He had already accomplished His course, and performed the works of His heavenly Father. The heaviest of all was still in store for Him; the deepest humiliation, the bitterest suffering — Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha. But here on the mountain for some few moments He tasted beforehand the eternal, perfect majesty that was awaiting Him in His Father's house, and went on His way strengthened and refreshed.

"Otto, is it not also so with us in the world, with all those who through Him have been made children of God? We have all of us a shorter or a longer road of trial before us; but for a passing moment we may realize beforehand eternal life, perfect liberty and joy. Without this, existence would be unbearable to many souls. My soul rejoices within me! In each breath I draw I enjoy the fullness of life. Honour be to Him! Some such moments have also been vouchsafed to us here on the mountain!"

Was it Lili speaking? It was not the first time I had been startled at the freeness and scope of her remarks. It was astonishing to see how developed her whole being had become of late. But at the same time it was a source of anxiety; for it seemed exactly as

if she were hastening to have done with this world.'

"Do you know, Otto," she continued, as she took my arm, "I have a feeling as if I could never again find myself at ease on the level of the earth. It is a very happy feeling, but at the same time there is something inexpressibly painful in it. I do not say that I would give a year of my life; but I would give much, much, to be able to prolong our stay here on the mountain. A day or two more—what do you say Otto, dear Otto?"

"Do you think it would do you so much good, Lili?" I asked mournfully.

"Yes, indeed; already I feel much better. I breathe so freely, and my heart is so quiet and calm."

"Well, then, talk to mother about it. My will is your will, my own Lili!"

Meanwhile all was astir upon the mountain. A busy, though quiet movement was taking place in our camp. Fresh fires were being lighted. Some were preparing coffee, others were baking cakes of wheat, barley, or maize, on the heated stones; others, again, were watering the horses, or cleaning their arms. The Turks alone did nothing. Morning devotions over, they had lighted their first pipes, and were being waited on as if they

had been gentlemen born. But, farther off, a new life was stirring. Far and near, flocks of capering goats spread themselves over the surface of the mountain. It was a lively, charming scene!

My mother made no objections to Lili's plan. She had evinced of late (shall I call it) an admirable degree of self-denial, or merely of compliance; I think it was the latter. A life so devoid of all forms and rules certainly could not be pleasant to her. But she was too prudent not to see how much was at stake, and that for a while she must let matters take their own course. Lili was no less in her thoughts than in mine.

We remained, therefore, and did not repent it. Our free camp life, on the most glorious spot, raised as it were above the world, with a prospect over a whole land, and that land the Holy Land; with the purest air, with a nature as rich, as fresh, and as odoriferous as in the Garden of Eden, with a repose more perfect than I have ever before experienced; all these were real blessings to us all. Lili felt no palpitations at the heart, and was free from anxiety; her cheeks retained the same delicate hue. Her pulse (and how often her dear hand lay in mine!) no longer had those intermittent throbs, now bounding violently only to become

well nigh still, but beat evenly and calmly. I was not far from believing in the miraculous power of the mountain; and well nigh gave up all my sorrowful presentiments. I became cheerful as in days of old, and contributed not a little to enhance the happiness of those hours.

Later in the forenoon there came several troops of pilgrims, mingled crowds of nearly every nation. The poor, the sick, and the miserable composed the rearmost troop. Our encampment lay rather remote from the actual sacred spot, and thus we fortunately escaped the throng. It was a sight more than piteous, but Lili did not shun it. On the contrary, her heart burned within her; she must afford help and comfort everywhere wherever she was able, and I had to help her. And the help and the comfort she gave was rich indeed; partly in money, food, and medicines; partly in sympathising words and looks. What love beamed from her dark, brilliant eyes! How lovely she looked in her semi-eastern attire, as she quietly moved about among the unhappy people, all of whom could understand her so well, though her language was strange to them! There were rude natures among them; but her mission was sacred, and she herself sacred, even in the eyes of the most miserable. It was a significant circumstance

that linen for bandages was the article most sought after in this fair of mercy; it was more precious even than gold. But, unfortunately, our stock of this article was soon used up; and when Lili at last laid hands on the turban that she wore, I was forced to interfere. A nod and an arch smile gave me to know that she had come to her senses again. That was my share in the distribution of alms!

Towards evening I received a visit from the chief of the tribe, who had made himself responsible for our security from Nazareth to the mountains of Samaria. He had been hunting on the mountain, and was coming now with a stately retinue to salute me, and present me with a wild boar he had killed. Of course I had to make him a handsome present in return, in addition to those he had received already. But the great honour and civility he showed me were well worth this sacrifice. The worst of it was, that he deprived me of those priceless evening hours which I had thought to pass in idyllic tranquillity with Lili and my mother. I was obliged now to make preparations for a banquet to the best of my ability, of which the wild boar formed the smallest part; and to wear away the time in a not very lively, but not the less flowery conversation of compli-

ments with the chief, aided by an interpreter, who, in the most tedious way conceivable, unravelled for us the thread of our conversation. Still I had one consolation; it seemed to amuse Lili, who, wrapped in her veil, witnessed the whole scene at some little distance. The meal was the best part of it; and I believe I showed myself to be an excellent host. The Emir appeared highly gratified when he finally took leave, in order to seek night quarters, with a delicacy for which I felt grateful to him, lower down on the mountain, and thus left us sole masters of the high plateau——

But, my friend, let me break off my narrative abruptly! I notice that I am once more on the road to lose myself. There is no sound sense in imparting such communications from Hell. You may look for the continuation in Chateaubriand, or Lamartine if you please. As far as I am concerned, I am a fool, even after death.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ADVENTURES of all kinds are the order of the day here. But like everything else in Hell, there is no pith or power in them.

Vain is the endeavour to get anything out of them. Even the most exciting incidents leave only an indescribable feeling of vapidity and weariness behind.

The other day a young woman, trembling all over, threw herself into my arms in a lonely spot; not from any attraction towards me, but from fear of some one else. She was persecuted, and the nervousness peculiar to her sex had quite overcome her, the little fool.

On the one side, she had no cause to be alarmed, and on the other, I could not be of any use whatever to her. But such occurrences are common here; for the most part we move in scenes handed down from the upper world. So it was very natural that this delicate womanly creature I held in my arms, had met with a serious fright, and had taken refuge in my respectability.

When she had come to herself a little I asked kindly who it was that had persecuted her.

She raised her dove-like eyes, and it seemed as if she were going to have a fresh alarm, so retiring and bashful was she. Meanwhile she answered:

"He is always following me. I do not know his name; but it is he who is always asking after Beatrice. He believed that I was Beatrice."

I knew at once whom she meant. He is one of the public characters of Hell, if I may use the expression. This description is all awry, as, indeed, are all the ideas we have brought with us from the world. For in Hell all persons are public characters, though not one of them is so in the same sense as that which is attached to it in the world. By a public character I only mean that every one knows him in all the regions of Hell, points at him, makes grimaces at him.

"Where is Beatrice? has any one seen Beatrice?" These questions are incessantly on his lips; they are his whole thoughts, his fixed idea. "Where is Beatrice?" He is convinced that she must be in Hell, for he says: . . . but let me be silent on these abominations! And he searches after her with a burning, ravenous eagerness that I have never seen equalled in this place. But his search

is vain. If ever he did find her I am convinced that something would happen that would create a sensation even here. In other respects he is one of the most repulsive individuals I have ever known; and that is saying a great deal here. He looks like a complication of all the vices of the world; as if he were consumed to the very core of the heart, without any other soul than the wild, fiery passion that never gives him rest. And then the frightful wounds which he exposes to view. From any one of these certain death gapes out. It is a natural consequence that such an one as he belongs to the riff-raff of Hell. Neither was it strange that this chaste, modest young creature was terrified at him. Only one of those impure, burning looks would be enough to chase innocence itself into a mouse-hole. In default of a mouse-hole she had taken refuge in my arms.

"You are not Beatrice, then?" I asked.

"No!" she answered, with a gentle look, "I am Emily!"

We did not then make each other's acquaintance any further; but it was plain enough that there would be no impediment to its continuation.

As I left her I could not but indulge in some very peculiar reflections: "How had a

creature like this Emily ever come into the pains of Hell? She was the express image of beautiful naïve womanhood. Certainly, there is no security in good looks; on the contrary, it is generally the best looking people that go to Hell. But all the more security should there be in naïveness. That modest, timid look could not possibly be feigned; and in all respects, her person evinced an expression of a pure nature. She was delicate and graceful, not only in form and feature, but in all her manners. It was as if her soul was beaming through her in perfect innocence. And she was so young, almost a child. Possibly she might have been nineteen or twenty years old; but I am inclined to think she was younger than that. In the world, childlike innocence is of great repute, and with good reason: but how good the reason is, is best seen in Hell. Of a childlike nature, properly speaking, there is a total want here. In woman especially this childlike innocence can long maintain itself, spite of the temptations of the world and the flesh. Emily appeared to have been one of these choice and happy natures. She seemed to have emerged from the period of childhood pure and untainted, without even so much as a stain of the world upon her. But how was it she had come to Hell? It can

only be explained by that frightful theory, that mankind is by nature evil, and that from within the impulse of evil develops itself, how ever fair and noble be the disposition, how ever free it may be from the wicked world.

I met her again shortly afterwards. She did not see me, so I had a good opportunity of watching her closely. She was sitting in a retired spot, quietly but actively occupied with herself; and presented a spectacle as attractive as it was remarkable. Her dress was as simple as a nun's, perfectly white; and its modest folds were gathered round her light slim figure. Perfectly white from head to foot, without so much as a shadow of colour, she afforded a striking contrast to the gloomy darkness that prevailed around. There was only one thing lacking in her soft features for one to have pronounced her a perfect beauty, and that was, peace; she had it not, and consequently could not have it.

Her delicate hands were busied with something in her bosom: it was a necklace of pearls I found that engrossed her attention. She counted the pearls, first forwards, then backwards, pausing each time when she came to the middle. Whereupon she let the necklace fall back into her bosom, and commenced wringing her hands in despair. Pain and

anguish were visibly expressed on her lovely face. I thought I could even see tears in her large languishing eyes; but this, of course, was only imagination.

I made my presence known, and seated myself beside her.

"Are you the white lady?" I asked.

Before even I had said the words, it occurred to me how foolish my question was. There are such numbers of white ladies; in Germany alone there are half a score.

"I do not know what you mean," she answered: "I am Emily Fleming."

"Fleming and Sparkman, Glasgow, Trentbury Square?" I blurted out. It was a very old and well-known firm.

With a deep sigh, she nodded her head in assent.

What did she mean? did she belong to the firm?

While I was thinking over it, she had fastened the pearl necklace round her neck. She was sitting lost in herself, with her hands folded—I say, folded, for I should remark *en passant*, that no one can really fold their hands here. What use would it be?

Evidently she was suffering a great deal.

"Poor child!" I said; "you seem to be very unhappy."

"Yes, I am," she answered; "I have suffered a loss I shall never repair."

"What have you lost, then, my poor Emily?"

"Alas, a pearl!" she answered, wringing her hands.

Only a pearl! Trüly, that was a little thing to come to Hell for. And yet there are pearls of priceless value. As far as I can remember there was once a merchant who sold all that he possessed, to find such a perfect pearl that he had met with on his road.

"Perhaps the pearl may yet be found," I remarked good-naturedly. It was only an idle remark, and I was far from attaching any importance to it.

"Do you think so?" she asked with animation; "and yet I have sought for it a long while."

Something hovered before me, to the effect that he who seeks will surely find; but as I could not quite get it on my tongue's end, I gave it up, and confined my remarks to the words: "If you have sought for it so long, perhaps you are very near finding it."

With these lucky words I found the way to her heart, and we became quite intimate with each other. On another occasion, not long after, she told me her history. It was evident that it was a great struggle for her to do so;

but she met with great support in that powerful instinct that dwells in us all to make a light breast. Here everything comes to light.

"You alluded to the house of Fleming and Sparkman," she began. "Possibly you may have known the present head of the firm. My history dates far, far longer back. Let me see, it was his grandfather's great-great-grandfather. Yes, just seven generations back. Ah! how long it is ago!

"At sixteen years old I became the wife of Robert Fleming. As a happy bride he introduced me into his ancient, magnificent house. On our wedding day he presented me with a costly pearl necklace, worth a whole fortune in itself alone. But before he fastened it round my neck he went through the row of pearls with remarkable earnestness of manner, and gave me an explanation of them, which I can still remember word for word.

"'This large blue pearl in the middle,' he said, —'it is really no pearl, but a gem,—signifies your matrimonial faith. This blood-red pearl on the right of it, your love. And this transparent white pearl on the left, your innocence. The smaller pearls on the right and left signify the other virtues of the married state. And finally, the band which

keeps the pearls together is womanly chastity and honour.'

"Thus he spoke, and then fastened the necklace round my neck. At that time his words made no particular impression upon me; for all my thoughts were centred on the costly *parure*. But at a later period they have all the more occupied my thoughts. See, here is the necklace. The pearls are all there except one, the middle one. But this one which is missing has been my destruction.

"Did I love him? I scarcely know what answer to make. Perhaps I did not love him as I might have loved another. But so much I know, that for the first years of my married life I was a happy wife; happy in my husband, happy in the possession of two lovely children, which were the fruit of our union.

"Then a friend of my husband's came to the house; a false friend, as false as he was handsome. I do not know how it was, but he blinded me completely.

"Did I love him? I cannot expressly say that I did. I was attached to my husband in a very different way than I was to him. But my husband had never been able to awaken that feeling of intoxication within me which he awakened. A strange sensation of voluptuousness stole over me when in his presence;

I seemed to become giddy. What was it? madness or enchantment? Yet no! it lay rather in my blood, in my veins, than in my head and heart. It resembled a poison most. But it was a poison that was infinitely sweet. In vain I strove against its effects. No, I did not strive; for I well knew that that which I felt was of the Evil One. But I neither would nor could suppress it, wretched woman that I was!

"One day, when we were alone together in the drawing-room, he forgot himself so far as to place his arm around my waist. I cannot say I made much resistance. I could not; I felt exactly as if I must faint. Involuntarily, however, I must have made some effort, during which my necklace broke, and the pearls rolled on all sides over the floor. The same instant I was myself again. He, too, had suddenly become sober. As if an invisible hand were placed between us, we hurried away from each other.

"Yes, we had both come to our senses, to our most sober senses. I besought him to go away, and he obeyed. Then I set myself to search for the pearls. I found them all except one; the blue one, my matrimonial fidelity. How anxiously I searched that day, and many succeeding ones. But it was nowhere to

be found. For a long time I kept it a secret from my husband. None of the domestics were permitted to set foot in the unhappy apartment. And I searched and searched, with an ever-increasing agony of mind. But it was all in vain; and at last I had to give it up. The pearl had vanished as if by witchcraft; and at length the loss was discovered by my husband. It was a frightful moment. He said but little, but thought all the more. From that day forth a dark shadow rested over his face, which said far more severely than words can express, 'Virtue and honour are broken; your fidelity is lost. What can you be to me after this?'

"Conscience, too, seemed to have been powerfully awakened in this false friend, for from that time forth he kept at a respectable distance from me. What his feelings were I cannot say; but in my heart a fire was kindled which could never more be extinguished. Sin had led my heart captive; the evil passion would not yield. It was in vain that I strove against it. I was compelled to follow him with my eyes, to occupy my thoughts with him. Even in my dreams he usurped them. I could not get that moment out of my thoughts, when my fall had been so

terribly near. Though I inwardly shuddered at the thought, still it was my pleasure to dwell on the scene; and each time it afforded fresh nourishment to my passions. I felt myself hopelessly entangled in the net of the Evil One. And yet—yet my heart had been pure till I learnt to know him; evil had not only been strange to me, but had been far away from my thoughts. Oh, how suddenly can innocence vanish away! My very being was infected. There was only One who could have cleansed me—He who would not condemn the adulterous woman. But Him I did not seek, blinded as I was by another.

"I was taken ill, but even then the evil passion did not quit me; it burned like a fever in my veins. In my delirium I must have betrayed everything to my husband. I died. My last impression in the world was that moment in the drawing-room. I departed, and when I opened my eyes once more I was in the torments of Hell. It could not have been otherwise!"

After a lengthened pause Emily continued her narrative:—

"Have you experienced what it is to revisit the earth? Well, then, you do not know the agonizing necessity we have to submit to here. I could have no rest. I must

return to search after my lost pearl. And now I have been searching for it two centuries; it was, it is not to be found.

"What I felt as I revisited my old home as an outlawed spirit cannot be described. But a wonderful dread was the prevailing feeling of my heart. I trembled as one who is walking along forbidden paths. Wherever I came I brought discomfort with me; but I myself was ill at ease.

"Not a corner in the great old house did I leave unransacked; up and down, in the passages and in the rooms, in the garret, in the cellar, everywhere I sought for my lost pearl. And everywhere I brought terror with me; but all the dismay I caused returned to fill my own heart. Every one who ever has inhabited that house has heard speak of the lady with the lamp. To meet me is to feel the horrors of death. Only one or two aged domestics, who have become grey in the service of the house, can stand their ground against me. One of these has seen me so often, is so used to my apparition, that he passes boldly by me with a silent prayer. We go each of us on our business through the silent passages, only with this difference, that he is on the path of right, I, on the contrary, on the road of evil. It does my poor beating heart such good to

meet an old acquaintance in that deserted house. It seems like a taste, like the perfume of home. I have seen him busy in the house at all ages of his life. His time will soon be over now; his hair is grey, his gait tottering. He is the only one who is not frightened of me; and he has no reason to be so. I can do him just as little harm as he can do me. I only search for my pearl. 'Oh, my pearl! where shall I find thee?' is the one thought of my soul.

"I busy myself in the best bedroom. It once was mine. There stood our bridal bed; there my children's cradles; and there, too, was my death-bed. In every corner I find bitter recollections, but no pearl!

"I go through the drawing-room. It was here in an unhallowed moment that I became lost to myself, and fell. Here my pearl disappeared; so here I search the most diligently, with an eagerness I cannot describe. But the pearl may have got elsewhere; some one may have found it; so I search through the whole house. Every drawer is ransacked, from the lady's jewel-case to the servant's work-box. It is the women especially that I suspect.

"I flit through the long corridors. There my apparition is dreaded most. Among these is one that has been used as a picture-gallery

for centuries. Here is my husband's portrait, he who was so shamefully wronged. I dare not cast my eye upon it. Still I am riveted whole hours before it on the same spot. I think, 'May there not be some token of forgiveness and reconciliation on his face?' Of course there cannot; I know it, though I am unable to raise my eyes to it.

"In this gallery I give free vent to my shame and despair. Here, too, is my own picture. I am represented in bridal attire. They said I was pretty once, yes, very pretty; but I seem to myself to be frightful. And a terrible feeling comes over me as often as I pause longer than a moment by this picture of mine. It seems just as if the picture were myself, and I but the empty likeness.

"Here, too, are the portraits of my children. My heart swells within me. Once they have lain upon my bosom; but, alas! they will not acknowledge me; they know of no mother, no maternal love. They regard me with strange looks. As an outcast I must cower beneath their glance, and disappear.

"I have seen one generation succeed another in that honoured house. They all belonged to me, but I was not only a stranger but a terror to them all.

"The old house is known far and wide, and

is as respected as it is known. Everybody knows that it is haunted. Often have the family thought of quitting it, but have always given up their purpose as impossible. The ancient mercantile firm is so intimately associated with that old house that it can endure no separation.

"In a new house, they say, the business would fall to the ground; so they remain there, and I roam about, the only weak spirit amongst many strong. Moreover, they know the whole history of the ghost; they know every part and parcel of it. It is whispered as a tradition in all the corners of that old, dark house. They know that I am the ancestress of the race, and what was the cause of my misfortune. Under the pressure of this thousand-tongued tradition its posterity has grown so cold and precise that no band, to say nothing of a band of pearls, will ever again be broken by any of the family.

"That unhallowed pearl necklace is still in the family's possession; but the fairest, the costliest pearl is wanting. In its place they have hung a cross of jewels: it signifies faith, they say. But it is not the faith I lost, at all events.

"The necklace is handed down as an heirloom from one lady of the house to another;

and each of them beholds me, if not sooner, at all events on one of the last nights she has to live, when I come by the bedside and ask, 'Where is my pearl?'

"In the early branches of the family no answer was given to my question. At their speechless dismay I awoke, terrified myself, and fled trembling away. But of late they have adopted the plan of laying the dying person's hand upon a bible; and now the answer ever sounds, even though unaccompanied by words: 'It is found! Here is the pearl!' It is not my pearl; but you understand me, my friend. Oh, alas! had I found that hidden pearl, on which the dying person's hand rests so securely, the loss of that other would have been quite retrieved. But without my pearl I was, and am, and shall be, in agony and in torments."

Such was her tale. I looked into her fair face, which, even under the influence of such violent excitement, still retained its bewitching loveliness, still bore about it traces of child-like innocence and goodness. I thought to myself, but did not give vent to my thoughts, that if any but her own self had told me this history of an impure passion in so pure a vessel, I would not have believed it.

But what is passion? Its first beginning is

only a thought or an idea, that, as it were, by chance assails the heart. No one knows whence it comes; it is like the driving cloud. An electric spark emanates from the contact, and the spark ignites, and a burning fire sweeps through your whole frame. Your nerves thrill; your blood boils. The former may, perhaps, regain their wonted balance; but the burning restlessness in your blood will, perhaps, never again settle down. The truth is, that if you even had oceans of blood in you, one single drop of poison is sufficient to taint the whole. It is no longer a thought, an idea; it is a being, a strange, wild, unruly being, that has come to life in you. The evil passion has got the mastery of you, how ever innocent you may be, or seem to have been, before. And how far it will carry you, no soul in the wide world can tell.

Therefore, watch your thoughts, if you will escape the pains of Hell! Watch the first beginning of sin! It seems so little, and so weak, but it gets so strong, and so dangerous. But should the poison, the sweet poison, already have entered your heart, there is but one antidote. It is a bitter, purifying repentance.

And whence can you obtain it? I cannot tell you that.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OFTEN some melody or other runs in my head, and I cannot get quit of it. I am obliged to hum it over and over again after a spirit fashion; it thrills incessantly in my ears, and through my soul. It is not I who have caught up the air, but the air that has caught up me, and persecutes me in the most cruel manner.

It will be difficult for you to imagine how painful such a melody may be to me. The more stirring, the more enchanting it is, the greater the pain that ensues, the deeper does it cut my heart and soul. It is not only that different recollections are thereby brought to life. Certainly it causes pain, and the sweeter the reminiscence, the deeper the grief; but I am so used to it, that it is the least part of it. The melody in and by itself comprehends an essence which is in grating disharmony with existence in Hell. Music and Hell, you may conceive what it is! A combination enough to drive a soul raging mad. For this pining longing after

something infinitely beautiful; these deep, happy regrets; these ravishing presentiments of future glory; all this has now lost its object and its truthfulness; an incurable breach has taken place with that higher world, so rich in promise, against whose shores the waves of the music gently ripple. Never till now have I properly understood these harmonies, and this is just the painful thing about it. They give me, as it were, tidings of Paradise and its blessedness, and I find myself in Hell and in torments.

Was it not Sychem or Sychar, between the mountains of Samaria, where we once halted at noonday, and enjoyed our *siesta* beneath the shadow of the palm trees? Yes, and the inhabitants of the country still asserted that a ruined cistern, which even yet gave water, was the well of the patriarch Jacob. Never have I seen grass look fresher, or vegetation more luxuriant, than on this blessed spot between lofty, nearly barren, mountains. The valley was filled with gardens after gardens of fig trees, mulberries, pomegranates, grapes, sycamores, and date trees. Here and there a hedge of cactus and aloes; while on the slopes were groves of olive trees, and still higher up a few pines and the evergreen oak.

But we had to pay dear for our repose by

Jacob's well. The heat was intense, even in the shade, and the swarms of insects proved an intolerable plague. We broke up early in order to meet the refreshing breeze from the mountains. During a short rest on our road thither, Lili told me the following history.

But a preface is necessary. Two things will, doubtless, strike you, in this little story, which treats of faith, an infirm, deranged faith, that struggles in vain to become clear-sighted, and to obtain repose.

First, that it is Lili who tells the story, Lili, who, in the pure faith of her childhood, faithful and bright as a mirror, had never known anything of these doubts, these struggles, these deep falls and pains. Even if she had read or heard the story, how was she able to repeat it with such truthfulness, and impart to it all the force of reality. I cannot say. I can give no other explanation than that which lies in inspiration. I have, I think, already hinted, that during the latter portion of her lifetime, Lili's physical and mental nature developed themselves with astonishing speed. To this I will only add that, as her strength increased, it seemed as if her whole being were under the influence of inspiration. All the mysteries of Heaven and earth were clear to her eyes.

And, secondly, that it is I who tell the story, I, who in Hell can form no idea as to what faith is. If I could, I should either not be here, or should, at the same instant, be set at liberty. To explain this phenomenon, I must direct your attention to something which ranks far below inspiration, namely, to memory. Yes, it is simply a matter of memory, my inner being, my spirit, gains no benefit from it.

My heart, perhaps, may, but not my spirit. Puzzle myself as long as I may—and do you not think I have done so?—I am quite unable to be conscious of anything that has the remotest resemblance to faith.

One or two features are clear enough to my conscience, but directly I try to gather them together they dissolve and vanish away.

It is exactly as it has sometimes happened to me with some face or other I have recalled. I have been able to picture it feature by feature, the eyes were so and so, such was the forehead, the mouth, the chin, and ——.

But I have not been able to unite all these features into one picture. The countenance, the individuality, would not reveal themselves to me. The reason, doubtless, must have been that there was a gulf, to speak figuratively, between us, as there is now between me and the kingdom of salvation.

Ah! I have hit it better than I had imagined! There is a person I am always longing to see before me; it is God's Son, who once was made man for the sake of a lost world. I can picture His features separately to myself, can talk, can even tell of Him. But never, never more shall I see Him himself in the fullness of His mercy and love!

Let this suffice! In a word, the truth of the matter is this, that great as the perplexity was that prevailed in that poor soul of whom we are speaking, it is still a heavenly brightness compared with the darkness that rules within me.

But you must not think that I do not feel in repeating this and other histories.

Lili, then, related as follows:—

"When the Apostle Peter was bidding a last farewell to the disciples at Antioch, before proceeding to Rome to die as a martyr, a great multitude of friends, old and young, accompanied him a long way on the road. At length the time came for them to part. With many tears they received the embraces and blessing of the Apostle, and thereon returned on their road with heavy, but God-loving hearts. Alone with his companions the Apostle continued his journey.

"And yet all had not turned back. An

aged man remained behind, after having received the farewell kiss, to follow the Apostle a little farther. When Peter noticed this he stopped, and bade his companions to walk on.

"'You have something on your heart still, my son,' said the old man, kindly, as soon as they were quite alone. 'Say what is it you require?'

"'Father,' answered the stranger, with a quivering voice; 'is it not by faith that a man is justified, and is saved before God?'

"'Yes, truly, my son; have you not this faith?'

"'I have it, venerable father; but know not what I have in it. For there is nothing more infirm, more unstable, than my faith; and yet that is the only thing on which I can rest my hope of salvation. It is the source of all my tribulation and distress. At one time it is great, at another little; and again at another it quite disappears, though only for a while. Sometimes it breaks, as it were, into a thousand pieces, of which I only retain one single one, the precious Saviour's name. . . . Oh, thou, my Saviour! There have been times when faith was the fullness of life in me; it has raised me up on its powerful wings far above the world and all its perishable things. I believed only, and was happy. I

believed that I only needed to pray, in order to obtain; to seek, in order to find; to knock, that the kingdom of Heaven might be opened to me. I believed that I was sealed with the Holy Spirit, and that I could never more stray away from God's fatherly hand and heart; that I was purchased and bought with a price, and through time and eternity was safe in my Saviour's love. I had no arrogant thoughts in all this, be assured, Father Peter! But still it must have been a vain belief. For just at such times, such moments, when I felt myself to be in the closest and happiest union with the Saviour, my fall was nearest at hand; and oh! how deep that fall has often been! I plunged suddenly downwards from the heights, and found myself lying in the dust, crushed, bleeding, faint; exactly like that man who once journeyed from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves. But—the good Samaritan was far off!

"'Ah, my father! what trials have I not had! It was little to me that the world testified against my faith; but my own life's experience testified against it. It was more than I could endure.

"'And yet I ever rose up again to renew the battle of life. Again and again I made my understanding captive in order to live in

the faith of God's Son. Vain, miserable attempts! I fell ever anew!

"'Oh, how grieved I have been; how I have wept over myself! But I never found in this repentance of mine the true power of the Holy Spirit to bring about a lasting and secure union with my Redeemer. Even you, Father Peter, once wept bitterly after a great fall. But after you had wept, you rose up never to fall again, never to deny your Saviour more. But I have again and again been forced to weep these bitter, to me doubly bitter, fruitless tears. I rose up only to fall afresh, and again to deny my Lord and Master.

"'Is it not true, that salvation cometh of faith only? But you see, righteous father, what is the state of my faith. I have but one name for certain, the precious Saviour's name; that alone has never deserted me. All else is tossed up and down, and is ever ready to suffer shipwreck. Even if I had not known before what to think of my faith, it would have been terribly clear to me, when I lately heard that apostolic word declare, "Show me thy faith by thy works!" For my works, father, if they are not altogether evil, are still on the whole full of foolishness, and testify in a mass against my faith. I must allow that my faith never has stood its trial. Were

I to judge myself, I should have to say "it is useless." I dare never hope to be saved by it.

"'When I now look back upon my past life, how long has the struggle been, how severe, how painful! Yes, I often stood upon the brink of despair. I will not say that my powers, after so many downfalls, so many fruitless exertions, are now nearly becoming exhausted. For strong or weak, I will, I must, continue to struggle on; and, after all, it is not mine, but God's strength whereon the victory depends. But, my father, I am beginning to be an old man and infirm, and am verging towards the grave. Humanly speaking, dare I hope to conquer now, where I could not conquer before? This reflection causes me more than the horror and pain of death! I have only one hope left, namely this, that the good Samaritan, whose name has never left my heart and my lips, if not sooner, will at all events in my last hour come to me, take compassion on me, and take me to the inn, never more to lose sight of me again.

"'But will he come? Often and often has he bound up my wounds; I cannot doubt that; but I never came into the inn. Will he come? Am I not altogether unworthy of him? I have loved, not father nor mother,

son nor daughter, but that which was far more pitiful, more than him. And my faith —dare I in a word give that poor, unstable, and timorous essence which I bear within me the name of faith, of a saving faith? Oh, holy father, what shall I do to find peace? What shall I do to avoid destruction and be saved?'

"The Apostle delayed answering. His countenance became, as it were, transfigured, as he looked before him into space. What was it that had moved the old man's heart so happily? It was a recollection! He saw himself in the spirit by the Lake of Gennesareth; he heard once more the risen Saviour asking:

"'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?' And his heart replied, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!' And the Saviour added, 'Keep my sheep!'

"'Keep my sheep!'

"The Apostle's look fell upon the suppliant. Here was one of the Good Shepherd's lost sheep. And he said to him with inward emotion:

"'Poor man, as you cannot rectify your faith, henceforth try to rectify your love. Pay attention to what I have to say. Henceforth you shall have but one aim, one thought,

namely, how you can show the Lord your love. Your whole life shall be given up to this thought. In all your actions, in all your relations, you shall have this only before your eyes. The greatest thing must not be too great, the smallest too little, for you to show your Saviour that you really love Him. Sacrifice after sacrifice shall you bring Him, as you show Him that in all things you deny yourself for His sake! Yes, for His sake! Henceforth the spirit of these words be your strength! Let them live in your soul, and act according to them! Then shall you find peace, and be happy; for in the same proportion that you let Him feel that you love Him, will you feel that He loves you, and so you will be saved. Love will be in and for you the fulfilment of the law.'

"'See,' continued Peter, with an impressive voice; 'see how wonderful this love of His is! It appears exactly as if it were you who were bringing Him sacrifice after sacrifice. But it is only so in appearance; for the value of all the offerings you bring Him does not benefit Him, but you yourself. He takes nothing, but only gives, according to His word: "It is more blessed to give than to receive!" He is satisfied with your love alone. It is not you, but He Himself who makes the sacrifice, as the fullness of that

sacrifice He once offered is of infinite benefit to you, in life, in death, and in eternity.

"'My son, now go in peace, and for the rest of your life think only of this one thing; how, in small things as well as in great, in everything you may be able to show the Lord that you love Him!'

"'But faith, oh father,' asked the stranger, 'how shall it fare with faith, by virtue of which alone a man can be saved?'

"A hallowed smile lightened up the old man's features as he answered:

"'Son, trouble not yourself about it. There shall be no lack of faith. Simple child, do you really think that faith can be lacking there, where the fullness of love is present? Go your way, hold firm to that you have! Mercy and peace be with you.'"

Did I not speak to you some time ago of one great pain in the place of many? Well, my friend only be patient! I have more to say about it.

We wander about here always on the brink of despair; that is intelligible enough. But a little push, and we should fall headlong into the depths below. I am, of course, referring to the depths of our own hearts, into which we plunge, a prey to the powers of evil let

loose there. Sometimes in silent despair we submit to our fate, and allow ourselves in all meekness to be torn asunder; at others we make a fierce resistance, and only allow ourselves to be taken after a bloody struggle. It all depends on our humour! But how unequal is this terrible battle! It is a battle with naked hands against teeth and talons. Can you not see it plainly before you?

But the most fearful thing is, that I am personally present in this encounter, both with my hands on the one side, and with my teeth and talons on the other side. With my hands I am desperately determined to defend myself, with my teeth and talons I am furiously bent on tearing myself to pieces. On the one side there is the natural instinct of self-preservation; on the other, an unnatural, ferocious detestation of myself.

I do not know how long these paroxysms last, it is quite uncertain, there is no natural limit to them. Nay, nay, my friend, do not think there are! Here, in Hell, nature is not exhausted as in the world; in fact, there is no nature at all. As I am sitting here, there is not so much as a particle, a drop of nature in me.

But the paroxysm comes to an end at last. When I have raved my time; when there is

not, as it were, a bit of me left, so to speak, I gradually become calmer, and am as I was before. It abates, you would say in the world. Well, the expression does not quite suit; but let me just for once say the same here, "it abates!"

So far all paroxysms resemble each other. But sometimes—(and I am entrusting to you the innermost secret of my soul; I might say the most precious, but there is more in that word than Hell admits of)—sometimes, when all remorse and pain sinks down, the image of the crucified One appears in all its majesty, as if in triumph, to my spirit.

Yes, truly, it abates! It is as if the tempest and the billows had laid themselves to rest, and a dead calm had ensued. The actual torture is then certainly not less; but now there is only one immeasurable pain, as silent as it is deep; one monstrous remorse instead of thousands. What a terrible change! It is just as if I had been one of those who crucified Him!

But there is nothing ennobling in this pain. Peace remains far away still. And let me confess it——ah, I said much too much just now when I spoke of the picture of the crucified One. I would so fain believe that I saw it before me.

At the first moment it appears to me as if it stood expressly before me; but when I look at it, it has vanished. Nay, it is there, I am convinced. But I cannot retain it; it disappears from me in mist and darkness.

But the cross; the cross on which He hung remains behind; I can see that as plainly as ever I saw anything in the world! My friend, is not even that a great deal? I am unable to attach any definite idea to it; the more I exert myself, the more confused and perplexed I become. In the world the cross is the emblem of faith. But it is here I fail. Nevertheless the cross is something in itself; for it is His cross. And I have seen it before me!

Is there not a hope contained therein, old friend; a great hope, according to our condition here?

Oh, how happy are you who can wander beneath the cross! And yet you so often wander beneath it with murmuring, and tears, and bitter lamentations.

CHAPTER XXX.

We were sitting together on a lofty, precipitous slope above the sea. Over our heads some solitary trees, which served as a landmark to sailors, murmured in the wind; and far below our feet the waves broke with a melodious ripple on the beach. No music in the world could have been more enchanting.

It was towards evening; one of those precious, long days, which compose the greatest fascination of the north. Even when the sun has sunk down, it is not properly night; twilight still lingers over the face of nature, as if matter itself had drunk in the light and would not again give it up. It is only in the north that summer, in the fullest sense, is known. One day holds out its hand to the other; there is no night, only some soft twilight hours to doze and dream in, and from which one may snatch the necessary repose.

But the last hours of day are undoubtedly the loveliest, especially when the sea lies

extended before one, with a distant coast line on its farther side, raising itself up clearly and boldly, and seeming to invite the soul to repose on numberless points, the one surpassing the other in beauty.

But my soul was bound to the coast on this side; for she was sitting by my side. She was doing some fancy work; and I should have been reading, but the book had fallen from my hand, and I had forgotten myself and everything else around me. I had only eyes for her. How lovely she was in the first bloom of youth; but little over fifteen years!

Certainly she was more lovely afterwards; but what can be compared with this first charm of maidenhood? I cannot express myself better than by saying that there is a something peculiar, unspeakably touching about it. She was so delicate, so pure and bright; like some field or woodland flower that has just unfolded its blossom, on which no spot or stain is visible, but which is perfect in its simple, dew-besprinkled loveliness—ah, how long!

Her delicate features were somewhat pale; but it was the paleness of the lily, when the evening blush casts its farewell tint upon it. Her blood was coursing fleetingly under her transparent skin in all the freshness and per-

fume of youth. It needed so little to call forth a blush upon her cheek. Her thick, shining dark hair artlessly encircled her open brow, and fell down in heavy ringlets, almost too heavy, upon her neck and shoulders. Her eyes were cast downwards, and their long lashes threw a peculiar shadow upon her cheeks. Thousands of graces lay modestly concealed within it. There was something so child-like in the gentle, anxious look of her face, that in contemplating her one could for a moment forget that there was a woman before one. But only for a moment. For there was a majesty enthroned on her forehead, a hidden life in the shadows of her downcast eyes, that plainly proclaimed the maiden.

I sat contemplating her. A remarkable, I might say a hallowed, peacefulness was diffused over her whole person; but it was no inanimate peacefulness. Her young bosom heaved and sank with a gently undulating movement that could scarce be observed. She was quietly occupied with her work. Now and then a gleam shot across her face, or a gentle smile played on her lips, as if some fresh thought or pleasant idea had just dawned upon her soul.

But as I sat thus lost in my contemplation of her, my spirit sank deeper and deeper

within me, and gave way to purely carnal thoughts. I devoured her, as it were, with my burning glances; I revelled in the inexpressible joy of having her in anticipation in my possession. And yet it was no impure contemplation I indulged in. Lili could never be an object for aught that savoured of impurity; but my flesh had led my spirit captive within me.

I had forgotten myself. And yet nothing escaped my notice. I noticed how little by little a delicate blush mantled up her cheeks, and thence extended to her forehead and neck; I noticed how her hands trembled. It was a warning sign. But I would not be warned; I could not tear myself away.

At length, with a mingled air of gentle reluctance and generous pride, she raised her eyes; and as their glances fell on me, as from twin stars in the night, the enchantment was at an end. A feeling of shame came over me, and once more I returned to consciousness.

"Why do you look so long and so intently upon me?" she inquired.

"Why? Can I say? . . . Do you dislike it, Lili?"

"I cannot help it, dear Otto, but it really is against my wish," she answered, hesitatingly. "Yes, 'against' is the proper expression.

When you look at me so, I become so strangely restless. It is just as if I were forced to submit to some severe restraint; as if some one held their arms around me, and I could not stir. I think I have experienced something similar in dreams. It is childish, perhaps; but you can do without looking at me in that way, can you not, Otto?"

"Of course! But are you afraid of me?"

"Afraid!" she exclaimed, beaming with animation; "afraid of you! Now I must laugh. No, that I am not. I might just as well ask if you were afraid of me," she added, laughing; "and that you certainly are not, are you, Otto?"

And she laid her soft little hand on mine.

"You are not angry, then?" she asked, after a little.

Yes, that I was. I was inwardly wroth with myself; at that moment I almost detested myself. But I answered as quietly as I could:

"Lili, when was I angry with you last?"

"Certainly, it is a long time ago!" she replied, laughing. "But, come, let us go on farther."

And she leaned on my arm so confidingly, so affectionately, as if she were actually trying to make me feel how little she was afraid of

me. And she was not thinking about it; but I was, and once more felt happy.

That contemplation—I might call it, that appropriation to myself of her beauty and charms, was in reality inexpressibly painful to me. I felt that there was a gulf between me and her who was the dearest to me on earth; and that the more I gave myself up to it the wider did the gulf become that separated us. But her look, her gentle voice, her unconstrained confidence, had transformed me in a moment. She was much stronger than the demon within me. The natural equipoise between spirit and flesh was again restored, and now the most perfect harmony reigned between her and me. At such moments I would be deeply impressed with the reflection that it was only by pursuing a spiritual road I should ever possess her; along other paths, even though aided by all the demoniac powers, I should never reach my goal.

We wandered along a path that ran along the beach after it emerged from the wood, and wound itself up and down, and in and out between the sloping heights. It was a lovely evening in June. The fishermen had returned home, and were busily occupied on the beach with their wives and children. Some large ships were gliding lazily along, with flapping

sails, as the evening breeze died slowly away. Some little children were playing on the sand outside the fishermen's huts; while in the horizon we could distinctly see the opposite coast radiant with the brilliant hues of sunset. It was one of those rare evenings, when one feels the happiness of an earthly life to be, as it were, the reflection of an eternal and blessed existence.

Alas! my friend; how deeply I sigh! But my sighs cannot be traced on these pages.

"Afraid of you!" continued Lili, as we wandered along. "What a strange idea! On the contrary, I feel so safe and secure with you. Often when we are walking together I think how strong you are, and I feel quite proud of it. It is just as if you were strong for me too as well as for yourself. You would never let any one insult me; and I say to myself, 'Who could stand against him?' . . . It must be glorious to be a man; but still more glorious is it, I think, to be a woman, and have a strong and noble man by one's side. And then, I think, not only how strong, but how wise you are.

"They say there is so much evil in the world; it is sad; but it cannot well be otherwise. But the wise man foresees, sees through, and meets the evil, and it has no

power over him. And, therefore, I go so safely and so comfortably wherever you take me, and do everything you tell me without reflection. I do not trouble myself about being strong or wise myself; but feel proud to think that you are so. And then I think how noble you are; what courage you have, not only to toil and to suffer, but to give yourself up to and to sacrifice yourself for those you love. I sometimes fancy to myself that I am in great danger and peril; but I am not at all frightened, because you are with me. You would not hesitate, I know, to risk even your own life for my sake. Yes, you smile! Perhaps it is only what you wise people call dreams. But you will not make me believe that all dreams are childish. For it is quite true that you are as wise as you are noble and strong. That is why I dream so, and not otherwise."

I smiled! For how could I help it? My bosom became so light, as if a thousand stars were shining there. It was perfect Elysium! What a power this child possessed to exalt my spirit within me, to raise me up above myself, without being conscious of it! But it was in this very unconsciousness that her almost divine power consisted. At this moment, and for a good while afterwards, I was not only the

strong and wise, but the noble man which her innocent nature pictured to itself, appointed to support and protect her, and ready to risk even life itself for her sake. Oh! happy moments! I have had my taste of heavenly joys, and shall never enjoy them again.

Evening was coming on apace; but we were close to our home. Not far off was the last place where we used to rest a while on our return from our walks. It was on a high cliff, several feet above the sea, and the highest point along the whole coast. Straight as a wall it reared itself up from the beach; and there was but a little breadth of sand between its foot and the sea. When the sea was high, the waves broke against its base and sent their spray far up its side. But this evening it was perfectly calm; only the uniform splashing and moaning of the waves upon the beach was to be heard. On the topmost point of the cliff a large cross was erected, and beneath it was a little bench. Here we rested ourselves, and sat hand in hand. The sun was on the point of sinking down. All around us, on land and sea, breathed forth an inexpressible peacefulness.

We sat a few moments in perfect silence; the heart had enough occupation in the quiet enjoyment of the scene around.

"See!" suddenly she exclaimed, as she raised her arm and pointed to the sky.

It was a flock of swans that were hurrying in their oblique flight to the lovely shores on the other side the Sound. They were very high up; but it was so calm that we could plainly hear their melodious trumpeting.

"Now they are gone!" continued Lili after a deep breath, when we had followed them with our eyes as far as we could. "Are they not like the souls of the blessed that, released from the fetters of earth, fly across to the land of eternity, where there is no more pain; where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes? . . . Oh! how they must rejoice! What a flight! what longing! what happiness!"

I, too, had had similar thoughts. This quiet evening hour had awakened in me, too, exalted and holy feelings.

But the silence was broken. We talked about the rippling of the waves; about the sweet music which one could never weary of listening to, and which, even without one's knowing it, carried the soul away with it into infinity. I compared it to the uniform, monotonous beating of a pendulum backwards and forwards, and remarked that as the pendulum measured time, so did the dash of the waves seem to measure eternity.

But—how moved I was! I would, I must, make an alteration; and it was not the Saviour's fault that an alteration did not take place. At this moment He was knocking at the door of my heart, and I asked in holy fear:

"Is it Thou who knocks? Oh, wait, only wait, till I have a place prepared for Thee!"

And He had to wait!

Have you not often experienced what a human being may suffer in dreams?

You had a terrible dream. Your heart was bound together by anxiety and pain. It was truly the pains of Hell. But when you awoke, how relieved, how happy you felt at being able to sigh forth, "Thank God, 't was only a dream!" It was exactly as if you had been born again. You felt, indeed, to the very bottom of your soul, how beautiful it was to live, even under the heavy weight of the common burdens and trials of life. You were so inwardly grateful, and everything seemed so bright. What hitherto had appeared to you heavy to bear, now vanished into nothingness to your conscience.

Ah, my friend! these bad, terrible dreams are not devoid of truth. Oh, take care! take care! If you do not, you will awaken some

time in terrible anguish, and find that it was no dream.

I do not know what to think or to believe. Doubt has taken entire possession of me, and doubt is a terrible thing. It is difficult to say which is the worst, remorse or doubt. Both are like ravenous wild beasts. Remorse is like a tiger that springs on its prey, and rends it asunder tooth and nail. Doubt is like a serpent, that crawls stealthily and discharges its venom, and coils itself round its prey with its icy-cold embrace, till the very bones crack. I am speaking from experience; the serpent only relaxes its hold of me to let me fall into the claws of the tiger.

Is Martin my son, or is Martin's sweetheart my daughter? Once I certainly arrived at the firm opinion that the latter was the case; but before that I was just as firmly convinced that the former was the truth. It is the imagination which is the ruling power, far more so than in the world. It is a fact that imagination is worse than pestilence.

I am, however, quite certain that one or other of the two is the case; but which? At one moment, I am inclined to one side; at the next to the other. Not only does it cause me incessant anxiety, but it is a constant source

of pain. I cannot dismiss the subject from my mind. Again and again I balance the one against the other, but the weights are false, consequently no result is obtained. I must have it cleared up, but each endeavour to do so only plunges me deeper into darkness.

Anna could solve my doubts and my torment; but there is no hope from this source—fool that I am—neither from any other. It is, in fact, sheer madness to name hope and Hell in the same breath.

Anna and I shall, probably, never interchange another word through all eternity. I see her every now and then, but can never get near her. She has become quite wild, after I had surprised her a few times, and is now ever on the flight. It is natural. Only fly, fly, poor Anna! Your executioner is after you! Once you found more than death in my embrace. Then there was nothing you denied me; now you refuse to give me a single word! But I am not surprised. And if I were, it would be that you have come into the torments of Hell. Ought not I rather to be in Hell twice over, and you away from it? . . . Pardon me, my friend! My thoughts are once more on their wild chase.

This is the knotty point, and hard, indeed,

is the knot; so hard, indeed, that all my nerves crack.

"What had Martin to confide to me? What secret could it be that was to clear up everything?"

This question, which was on my lips as I passed out of the world, has been my passport to Hell.

My friend, there is nothing more dangerous than such questions when one is lying at the point of death. The source of unquenchable torment is often to be found in them. Ask none other question but this alone:

"How shall I save my poor, sinful soul, and enter into peace?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

My letters have become less frequent. Are you not afraid that they will cease altogether? I often feel myself adjured to write, but I shun the exertion it entails. And even after I have begun to write, I have a great deal to contend against. Often and often I feel myself tempted to break off in the middle of a sentence, such a sudden loathing comes over me.

This brings Aunt Betty's letters to my mind. And it is well that I have happened to think of them, otherwise, notwithstanding my good intentions, this letter would have fallen to the ground. For I cannot deny, that it is only after a great struggle I am now taking up my pen, and the very sight of the ink, as it flows from it, causes me a feeling of disgust that is quite oppressive. But thinking of Aunt Betty always cheers me up.

I would speak, then, about Aunt Betty's letters. They were just like herself, earnest,

eccentric, full of humour, irregular and abrupt in their train of ideas. In short, her letters were fiery and flighty. I cannot express myself better.

She never wrote other than confidential letters; therefore she could, with reason, claim some liberties, and she certainly took very great ones. The greatest of these was, that she would frequently break off in the middle of a subject, and, without more ado, begin upon another. And this she did quite unconsciously to herself: it seemed to be a necessity. The fact was, ideas came streaming so quickly and so forcibly into her lively, earnest mind, that she was quite unable to get them committed to paper. Her thoughts were always a long way in advance of her pen. She wrote, if I may use the expression, by anticipation. The natural consequence was that no one who did not know her intimately, and who was unable to follow up her train of thought, however slight the hint might be, could possibly derive any benefit from a perusal of her letters.

But frequently neither an intimate acquaintance with her peculiarities, nor the shrewdest guesses, sufficed to do this; so that the most ridiculous mistakes occurred.

Here is one of them.

One day she came to me in a great state of alarm, with a letter in her hand.

"She must have got a screw loose, this excellent Mariane P——!" she exclaimed, quite dumbfoundered. "You shall hear; she has certainly done a pretty thing! What ever shall I do, poor sinner that I am?"

I tried to tranquillize her a little, and then got her to tell me more about the matter.

"In the town of R—— was a poor woman with three little children, whom we supported. The husband was in prison. Some time ago, my old friend informed me that he had returned home, but only in time to receive his wife's last breath. There he stood, then, with three helpless children, and helpless too himself. Something must be done, and that quickly.

"I answered her letter immediately, and enclosed some money, entreating her at the same time to send me an accurate description of the man and the children. You understand? She was to give me sex, age, size, &c."

"Did you want to know the man's sex, dear aunt?" I asked, roguishly.

"No nonsense, Otto! it is too serious a matter. God help me, poor woman that I am! What does she do, but send me the man and all the children in a heap. They are below in the kitchen, and are waiting for me

to provide for them. The man, a great idle fellow, stinks of tobacco. . . . Yes, I am nicely in for it!"

"You should not have written, dear aunt, to say that she was to send the man and his children without delay, and have forgotten to add the rest?" I said, inquiringly.

"How can you ask such a silly question. You know yourself how plainly and how decidedly I always express myself. Everything I have to say is always so clear to me, and the next instant it is copied down on the paper. Why, even a child could understand my letters. Simple Mariane! you are not old enough to have grown childish: and even if you had, you still might have understood my meaning. Only think, Otto; here she sends me the whole boiling of them six and thirty miles from the country!"

The man and his children had actually made themselves at home downstairs, and were devouring large quantities of victuals, evidently considering their journey to be accomplished. The man, who had just come out of the House of Correction, appeared to be a lazy, idle, good-for-nothing fellow. Aunt Betty was in a terrible state of perplexity. She wrung her hands, and ran up and downstairs, without knowing what she wanted, or what she ought

to do; but her thoughts were down below all the while.

The difficulty, however, was solved in the most successful way, partly through my father's powerful assistance. But the misunderstanding proved a real boon to the man and his children; all of whom, after some little trouble, were provided for.

It is a self-consequence, that lusts and passions in Hell, which are destitute of flesh, and of food to feed on, can find no satisfaction, and must become burning torments. But you can form no idea, without experiencing it, how they are set on fire. Naturally, therefore, the powers of the imagination are the masters. Even in the world this power of the imagination may be a terrible, dangerous thing. By excitement and exercise it can at last reach such a development as to take possession of the understanding. But it is only here that it first displays its wild, unruly nature. It becomes a perfect monster, that racks and wears away the constitution in the cruellest manner. Its whims, as you may suppose, take many different directions—the pleasures of the table, the bottle, beautiful women, &c.; in a word, every kind of natural and unnatural lust. The power of imagination knows no bounds. It works in the head like a kind of mental

steam-engine, and its effects are felt in the heart. Lusts and pleasures are kindled, glow, and, as it were, crackle; one becomes raging as it were with lust, and knows not whither to steer. . . . Alas! there is nothing, nothing to satisfy it on!

Certainly nothing is easier than to give the objects of one's desires a certain kind of existence. It is only necessary to wish, and one is in possession of whatever one desires: that is to say, one can have before one to the life a well-covered table, full bottles, an abode of luxury, in short, anything whatsoever. As regards pretty women, Hell is chock full of them. But all this is worse than nothing; it only serves to fill up the measure of torment. But let me be silent on such matters. It must be plain enough to you; and should it not be, I cannot give you better advice than bid you go and read King Ixion's history! Like him, we too embrace the cloud instead of Juno. The wheel too, on which he is whirled round and round, is a striking representation of the manner in which the powers of imagination toss us about and become a torment of Hell to us.

Perhaps you are inclined to ask, "Have you here been giving a sketch of your own sufferings?"

"Yes, of course," is my reply. But do not expect any more detailed explanation. Have I not, once for all, told you that I was a man of strong sensual inclinations, and violent passions? And do you think that either the one or the other has become any weaker here?

So I wallow in the lusts of a time that has gone by, like King Tantalus in the fable; and so at times I am consumed by a maddening, despairing passion. If there is any difference between me and others, it is this, that I am inwardly ashamed of myself. How can one who has loved Lili, aye, and has been loved by her, succumb to such grovelling enticements?

But there is another difference between me and other people. I know a means of escape from this Hell within a Hell; and my tyrant, that is my powers of imagination, must even promote it. As soon as Lili's pure and bright image appears before my soul, lusts and passions fall back powerless into the depths from which they emerged; the unhallowed fire within my breast is quenched, and I can still feel like a human being.

"I am so weary," said Lili softly!

Immediately I stopped the ass on which she was riding; and, with more than a mother's

tenderness towards her sick infant, I lifted her down, and prepared a seat for her to rest herself upon. It was the bridge that leads over Cedron.

"I am so weary!"

Oh, what a sorrowful, painful tale these few words contained! Determined to attach no importance to the idea of an ever-increasing feeling of weariness at the age of seventeen, I had hardened my heart against the truth. But in my heart of hearts I had sorrowful presentiments.

"It will probably terminate in the rupture of a blood-vessel," an English physician had told me in Jaffa, "guard her against all kind of exertion, and especially against every mental excitement."

And I had done so. How gentle and quiet had our pilgrimage been through the Holy Land! She had proceeded, as it were, within a magic circle, where nothing savouring of danger or fear, and, above all, nothing of a disquieting tendency durst show itself. Turks and Bedouins had to offer her their chivalrous services alike. Yes, those were glorious, never-to-be-forgotten days!

Everywhere she found soothing, elevating tokens of Him, the Saviour, to whom she had wholly given her heart. And everywhere

He spoke to her through the Holy Scriptures. He walked with her from place to place; and she felt so happy. Once she said, "I feel as if I were in Heaven already." The sun rose and set for her, as in a blissful dream. It was difficult for her to believe that what she experienced was reality. Time for her was no more; no more days, nor hours, only moments snatched from eternity.

And yet, at last, it came like a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky. It was not a mortal blow; but doubtless it would be if it returned, and, in all probability, it would come again.

She had regained a little strength now. But how long would it hold out? She did not worry herself; but, as for me, it was as if her life were in my hands. She was like a broken lily, that still breathes forth its sweet perfume, and extends its silvery leaves beseechingly towards Heaven; but which never again will raise its drooping head.

"Lili is weary!" That is the whole history. The flower will wither away, and its dust be mingled with the earth.

We had encamped by the Cedron. That moment, that scene, is still vividly pourtrayed to my soul. I think I could point out every stone, indicate every fissure in the mountains that hemmed us in around.

We were close to the arched bridge that spans the brook. Behind us was Mount Moriah, where once was the temple of Solomon and Herod. Now it bears the towering mosques of Omar. On the right, an unimpeded view down the Valley of Jehoshaphat unfolded itself. I call it a valley; but, properly speaking, it is but a mountain defile. For it is deep and narrow, and at places but some hundred feet broad. Its right slope is perforated by numberless ancient crypts, hewn out of the solid rock. Here are the tombs of the kings and prophets. On the sloping side of the mountain of offence on the left, and in the background is a miserable little Jewish village.

In the foreground, the Cedron wound along in its deep stony bed, which, for the present, was quite dried up. On the farther side, the gently sloping sides of Mount Olives, with the garden of Gethsemane, reared themselves aloft. A little group of time-honoured olive trees marked the spot. Between the deep dark shadows the setting sun here and there threw a dazzling stream of light on one side of the valley. Only on the mountain top was it subdued and soft.

It was perfectly shady around our camp. A cool, but scarce perceptible breeze had begun to waft down the mountain side. Lili was

sitting absorbed in thought, with her arms hanging carelessly down, and with folded hands. She was so weary, perhaps even unto death. Her eyes were cast down, almost closed, and she was very pale. I could not help comparing her to some beautiful picture of mourning on a monument. But it was not her paleness so much that caused me anxiety, as a constantly and suddenly recurring glow. It was like a flame that momentarily flashed across her face, only to leave it as pale as it was before.

On the right, a little in the background, lay the ass and its driver, both of them asleep. "Happy beings," I thought, or rather, "happy asses."

On the left, somewhat farther off, sat the Turkish soldier we had with us for protection, armed to his teeth, smoking his long pipe in luxurious, heedless indolence.

A deadly silence prevailed all around. It was unendurable. I broke it by softly asking Lili what she was thinking of?

"I am thinking of my sins!" was the gentle answer.

"Of your sins!" I replied, as I had hard work in refraining from saying something which I knew would pain her. "My good child, they cannot be so many or so great."

"Do not say that, Otto. We are all of us constantly sinning, even without knowing it; and therefore it is that we know so few of our sins; but God knows them all, and in his sight they are great."

"But how did you come to think of them just now?"

Lili started. It took so very little on her part to make me all attention. I let my eyes glance around. Yes, I had cause to feel ashamed of myself. What place in the wide world was more calculated than this to bring one's sins to remembrance?

"Dear Otto!" answered Lili with emotion, "I have just become aware of a fresh sin. Even on this spot it is impossible to keep sinful thoughts at a distance. Suddenly there arose within me an ardent desire to live a little longer; but I forgot to accompany the wish with those words of the Saviour, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' In all things whatsoever we should resign ourselves into God's fatherly hands, else we cannot be his children."

An unspeakably bitter sensation of vexation and pain shot through my self-willed heart. Involuntarily my eyes turned to the spot where the Mussulman was sitting, and I thought, "It is just as if the words had been

spoken from yon Turk's heart." But soon pain gained the mastery, and I replied:

"Lili, do not doubt it, you will live. Drive away these sorrowful thoughts. O Lili! my sister, my child, remember how dearly you are beloved!"

"I know it, Otto," she answered with a sweet smile, as if she had never known what pain was. "Dearly loved on earth, but more dearly still in Heaven."

"But you must not think the wish sinful, dearest Lili," I said, as she was relapsing into her former mood. "On the contrary, give free utterance to it, and it will be fulfilled; you will live. And if there is any selfishness in it, it is merely one of these natural instincts that God has implanted in the heart. My own Lili, do not be unjust to yourself. Never has a less self-willed, less selfish being than you lived in the world."

"Yes, so affection pronounces," she answered, letting her eyes fall with an expression of tenderness on mine. "But so far you are right. Even if my wish were full of self-will, it was not a selfish one. For I was not thinking of myself alone, but of others too. Otto, do you not comprehend that it was especially for your sake I wished to live? You would miss me more than any

one, would you not, my only, my beloved friend?"

Had I been alone with her, I should have cast myself down before her feet. I stammered forth, perhaps she did not hear me,

"I should die without you!"

Another silence ensued, but this time it was not painful to me. My heart was full of sweet emotions, though mingled at the same time with some degree of pain. Even I, at least for a moment, had seen Heaven opened above me.

Lili's face once more assumed its air of seriousness. A struggle was evidently going on within; but even it was full of tenderness and holy thoughts. What she struggled for was doubtless to be able to say with full and free affection, "Not my will, but Thine be done." But for the moment it seemed as if it would be undecided; for all at once she arose, and said with trembling lips:

"Ah! one cannot but think of one's sins, when the pressure of the chains which keep one back from God is felt. It is sinful to lean so much on the world. Come, my friend, I am strong again now; let us go on."

I gently pressed her hand before leaving hold of it, and answered, not without a tone of reproachfulness,—oh! how could I endure

it,—"On the world, Lili? Is it sinful to lean on them you love in the world? Is then your love a sin? Impossible! And yet you speak as if your heart were full of sins that pained and vexed you."

Lili let her full glance fall on me; there was a lustre in it, which I must now call unearthly. At that time I had no name for it. Her features seemed to be transfigured, as she replied with animation:

"Yes, my heart is filled with sins, God knows! But vex me? No, Otto, they do not vex me."

She pointed to the river Cedron, and then continued: "See, there is the river Cedron! Can you number the grains of sand in its bed, great and small? So many and more are the sins of the world. But God's Son once crossed over Cedron, heavy unto death over them all, and from that moment they existed no more. My sins, too, were amongst the number; but their place is no longer to be found—they pain me no more!"

So we went on farther, over the brook Cedron, up the ascent of Mount Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. We stayed awhile under the very same olive trees where the Saviour underwent that last struggle in prayer, when his soul was heavy unto death,

and the sweat fell from his forehead to the ground like great drops of blood.

Lili prayed as He had done, a fervent earnest prayer, but unaccompanied with anguish or pain. She prayed, too, for me I am quite certain. And the fruit of her prayer was a perfect peace. When she had finished, there was plainly stamped upon her brow,

"Yea, Father, Thy will be done!"

But I knew no prayer to say; on the contrary, I was nearly cursing my own weakness which had been the cause of our coming to the Holy Land. I wished myself a thousand miles away with her who was dearer to me than the whole world, as I made myself believe that life would have smiled upon us at home; while here death stared us everywhere in the face.

We returned by the shorter route through the Stephen's Gate, as we followed the *Via dolorosa* through the town. From station to station—the ruins of Pilate's house—the place where Mary met her son as he was bending beneath the burden of the cross, and where he fell fainting to the ground—the place where the Saviour turned round and said to the weeping women, "Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children,"—the place where the holy Veronica stepped forward with a napkin and

wiped the sweat and the blood from the Saviour's face, and the napkin was ineffaceably stamped with His image. Here we turned aside; the road goes further to Mount Golgotha. This road is called the Road of Sorrow; it was a road of sorrow to me! But it was not of Him I thought, who once proceeded along it as a lamb to the slaughter, under the curse of sin; it was of myself. Therefore, along the whole of that road I did not derive a grain of consolation; and therefore—yes, therefore—I am tormented now instead of being comforted!

Is it not strange that it has never yet occurred to me to pay a visit to the Jewish capital, one of the wonders of Hell, if I may call it?

Certainly it does not bear the name of Jerusalem; but it must doubtless be the same as that which goes by that name in the world. At least I cannot think of any Jewish capital except by comparison with Jerusalem.

A burning desire has suddenly come over me—I dare scarcely call it a longing—to make a pilgrimage to the city of Jerusalem. Truly, I never experienced anything but pain there; but then it was with her. It is in my power to revisit the places I once visited with Lili. Once more I can roam through the

narrow valley of Jehoshaphat, rest by the high bridge that leads over the brook Cedron, with Mount Olives before me in the distance. Again I can follow the road of sorrow from Gabbatha to Golgotha; and, if I will, lie down by the rich man's door upon the road like another Lazarus.

And yet if it is Jerusalem, it is perhaps quite different from the Jerusalem I once knew—a Jerusalem in ruins. There must be an immense difference between Jerusalem before and after the destruction. And yet the alteration must be great indeed if I could not find out the places once more which I visited with Lili.

I have no peace! The light is waning quickly, and I must away. It is only imagination that impels me, I know full well. But there is a kind of satisfaction in giving way to impulse.

Yet before I set out, I will not forget to inquire and make myself acquainted with the Jewish capital beforehand. Though it lies so remote, and so isolated, still there must be people who know something about it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FAR, far away, separated by a boundless desert from the main continent of Hell (if I may use the term) the immense Jewish capital is situate. It contains a world within itself. In one incessant cycle the history of the Jewish nation is repeated, from the catastrophe at Golgotha to the destruction of the city. At this point the history ceases; everything is enveloped in the death darkness; and when this has run its course it begins over again.

He who enters the city as the light begins to dawn, once more finds the population overcome with horror at the cruel deed that has just been committed. From every part those words are sounding, "His blood be on us, and our children!" Every one feels that something terrible has occurred, and that something terrible is still impending. All Jerusalem trembles. But the better classes among them, who helped by their presence at that great scene on Golgotha, ask themselves with

gnashing teeth, "Was He not the Son of God?" and beat upon their breasts, and rend their clothes.

Even the high priests and scribes, those stony-hearted beings, are visibly exhausted from what they have experienced. But they comfort themselves with the thought that the sepulchre is well guarded. Early on the great Sabbath morning they go out to it with Caiaphas at their head. Their cheeks are pale, their eyes bloodshotten, and their teeth firmly set, as they walk along. But Satan gives them strength. From Golgotha they perceive three crosses, but not one of them raises his eyes. Laying aside their wonted haughtiness they gather up their long garments and hurry by to the sepulchre.

Here they first can breathe freely. Yes, a smile even plays over their scowling faces. Everything is as it should be! The watch is at his post; the seal untouched; a huge stone closes up the entrance!

It is the great Sabbath. But never has this feast been celebrated with such little rejoicing in Jerusalem. The inhabitants cannot recover themselves. All wish the feast only to be over. Their thoughts are far removed from holy things; they try to read each other's anxious, disturbed countenances.

The bread is sour, and they cannot swallow it; the blood of the Paschal Lamb is congealed ere it can be sprinkled upon the door posts. The Angel of Death does not pass by; he is in the midst of them; they plainly feel how he steals upon their hearts.

But with the first glow of dawn a new life is diffused amongst the inanimate throng. Like a flash from the cloud that is big with thunder, the report spreads that the crucified One has arisen.

The tidings fall like a death-knell on their hearts. But can it be true? It is confirmed again and again; there is no longer room for doubt. Only later does the thought of searching the tomb occur to them.

It is empty; the watch is nowhere to be seen!

Pilate is one of the first who receives the dreadful tidings. Tortured by an evil conscience, he has expected the worst, and the worst has come. It is a truth, then, that there is a God who raises up the righteous even from the grave, and who hurls the unrighteous deep down into Hell. He trembles at every strange sound; each moment he expects to see the avenger at the door. He goes to his wife, weak, wretched man! He finds her melted in tears.

"Oh, my dream, my dream!" she cries, as

she wrings her hands; "oh! if only thou hadst had nothing to do with that Righteous Man!"

But the high priests and scribes are quick at devising expedients, like all hardened knaves. Hastily they circulate the falsehood that the body of the Nazarene has been stolen away by His disciples, who have spread the report that He is risen. Thereupon they repair to Pilate to complain of the negligence of the guards. Gladly does the perplexed governor give credit to the lie, and finds a wondrous relief in having the unfortunate watch cast into prison.

Yet the first report not only maintains, but gains ground. It is confirmed over and over again that the Son of Man has arisen, and has been seen of many. And the supreme council know of no better expedient than to issue the strictest prohibitions against the name of the crucified One who has arisen from the dead being mentioned.

But little by little, though tardily, these alarming impressions begin to wax fainter, and life goes on in its wonted manner. The multitudes assemble, like frightened sheep that have gone astray, under their old leaders once more, who do not forget to apply the plaister of self-righteousness with fatherly tenderness upon their wounds. Hypocrisy flourishes lux-

uriantly along all the pathways of life, and bears abundant fruit to death. From the whitewashed tombs corruption extends itself far and wide, and soon there is no whole spot on the body of the Jewish people. It is like carrion, and the eagles are not far off.

Pilate has been deposed. Other governors have succeeded him, not so weak as he was, and the people feel it. Cruelty and wrong are heaped upon them. It is no longer endurable. The flames of rebellion are kindled, and with it every evil passion. Jerusalem's worst enemy is within her walls—incurable dissension. Party rages against party in the wildest, most unnatural manner. No abomination, no horror, but it is tried. At length her last hour has come. The enemy breaks in, chafing with a thirst for revenge, in overwhelming might. There is an end to all distress and starvation; but it is a terrible end. It is the abomination of desolation, which never has been seen before, and never will be seen again till the end of the world.

As the death-darkness comes on, everything is swallowed up: there the history is ended, only to begin again when the next glimmer of dawn appears.

As I entered the city the time was already

far gone. The final catastrophe was approaching with hurried steps. Enmity within was already diffused far and wide; in everything a complete dismemberment prevailed. Only hypocrisy and hatred of the common foe kept the disunited parties together. Cheating, treachery, unchastity of the foulest kind, false witness, murder, witchcraft, were matters of every-day occurrence. But in all appearance it was still the magnificent, holy city of David.

Zion's stronghold reared its head as proudly as ever over the city, and from Mount Moriah the temple still glittered in incomparable splendour. Piety dressed itself in long robes, and stood prominently at the street corners and in the market-places; and a huge crowd of persons streamed daily to and fro from the temple. The disposition to piety evinced itself in many conspicuous ways. Amongst the pious devices used to decorate the street doors, I paid especial attention to one which was repeated over and over again, and which I could not but consider as being very significant—"Godliness is great gain." Two things, in fact, that the people of Israel aimed at—Godliness and Gain. Godliness, indeed, but feigned; merely a dead form without meaning: but gain, forsooth, in real earnest,

by all the means that ingenuity and cheating can devise.

It was with a throbbing heart that I, as a perfect stranger, slunk through the thronged streets. I was in Jerusalem; how different from that which I had known in the world, and yet the same! It was Jerusalem almost unchanged from that time when the Saviour had walked through it. The Saviour? Yes, He stood before my mind whithersoever I went.

Even Lili was for the moment forgotten in Him. Here in Jerusalem surely there must be people who could speak of the Lord.

But first of all I wished to walk on the road of suffering from Gabbatha to Golgotha, and I needed a guide. I applied to the first person I met, to the next, and so on to numbers, but met with a curt refusal from all. Some grew angry, and used threats when I asked them about the "*Via Dolorosa*." Possibly they thought I was a Roman, and spoke Latin. At first I thought it was merely from a dislike to strangers; but soon I noticed that there was not a single one who knew anything of the Virgin Mary's Son from Nazareth. He was forgotten, quite forgotten. Other prophets had come in his stead—false prophets.

So at length I was obliged to help myself, and find my own way as well as I could. First of all I went to Golgotha.

I stood on the hill of Golgotha absorbed in thought. I was searching after something within my breast, which, alas! was not to be found. So it ever was. Before I began to search it appeared to me that it must lie close at hand; but no sooner had the search begun that it was altogether gone.

I thought I was alone; but no! For on casting my eyes on one side, I saw a person standing on the very top of the hill with his arms stretched out. A wondrous form! and a position quite as wondrous! On approaching nearer I heard that his mouth flowed over with blessings.

"Who is it you are blessing so?" I asked.

He started, and regarded me with a wild air. It was evident that he was exerting all his powers to collect his thoughts, but could not. . . . With piteous looks, he answered in a puling tone,

"I do not know!"

But I knew now who he was. I had heard speak of him. It was the wicked thief that once had reviled the Saviour upon the cross. Now he blesses, as once he cursed, but knows not whom he blesses.

Still, at times, it is clear to him, and he answers, "The Son of God!" But then his mind is under a remarkable hallucination; he imagines himself to be the good thief to whom the Saviour said, as he hung upon the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He looks upon it as an unfortunate mistake that he has come into Hell. Paradise, he maintains, is his proper place. How much wiser was I than he, though not less wretched!

Thereon I set out in search of the brook Cedron, and after a little difficulty succeeded in finding it. Yes, and I succeeded after a very careful observation in finding the exact spot where I and Lili had rested near the lofty bridge. There I allowed myself a little repose; ah, no! it was not repose, merely a truce.

I sat there buried in thought, but experienced none of the satisfaction I had expected. The memory of Lili had not become more lively, more pleasant; on the contrary, I had tasted the bitterness of a deeper loss. Above all, I must confess to myself, that this pilgrimage to the Jewish capital was merely one of the thousand deceptions I met with. Jerusalem was merely a sepulchre, haunted by spirits in cruel earnest in the literal service of condemnation. Spiritually enfeebled, deserted of God, full of hate to man-

kind and herself, Jerusalem became after the day of her visitation but a national carcase, wherein the eagles already were gathered together.

Boundless ruin and destruction stared stiffly at me all around. How could anything be found here that could in any way promote my peace? I had but got my share of Jerusalem's destruction. Fool that I was, what else could I have expected? But wiser we shall never become, as little here as of old in the world.

As I slunk stealthily back the whole city was in uproar and confusion. It was the new governor, the last but one in the cycle, that was making his brilliant entry.

At the very remotest limit lies the City of the Sodomites. It cannot be visited, not even spoken of.

Next to it lies the extensive City of the Mahommedans. Against this, of late, another town has fastened itself like a swallow's nest against the wall. It is the Mormon City. It was but small and insignificant at first, but it develops itself with astounding rapidity. The Mormons crowd to it in ever-increasing streams; they pave, as it were, the road from the Salt Lake to Hell.

Mahomet and Joseph Smith are near kins-

men in spirit. One could call them brothers, if there was not an important difference between them. They are the two greatest liars the world has ever produced; and in the grossest sensuality they not only placed their enjoyment, but sought their Heaven. But in comparison with Joseph Smith, Mahomet was honour itself. For he placed sensual lust before men's eyes without any concealment, while Joseph Smith hypocritically covered it with a veil of spirituality.

Both have now lost the glory of their imposition. When they were in the world hundreds of thousands believed in them, though they themselves were conscious that it was a pack of lies altogether. Now, however, there is not one who believes in them, while they are convinced themselves that what they preach is pure truth and Divine wisdom. This constitutes their great pain and torment. They now have to eat their own filth, and people jeer at them scornfully while they gulp it down.

In the City of Mahomet it is said Paradise was begun. But there are no cool groves, no bubbling fountains, no nightingales, no delicious fruits. There is a superfluity of lovely Houris, brimming over with sensual lust, and yet ever virgins. But that is just the con-

suming agony, that, notwithstanding all the heat of passion, they ever remain virgins.

In the Mormon City the Millennium has begun. Unchastity is the characteristic mark of its existence. They are devoured here by unchaste desires, as if they were vermin. They swarm, bite, and sting, and produce an incessant scratching and smarting. Among the Latter Day Saints, devotion and unchastity are one and the same thing. Only gynæological sermons are preached in the Mormon City. And Joseph Smith is a master preacher.

They are both of them distinguished gynæologists, and never appear in public without a large retinue of picked women accompanying them. They are for all the world like fowls strutting about among a flock of hens; or rather like game cocks. For they are set a-fighting with each other just like game cocks; duels are frequent among them, and the whole population on either side take part in them. Of course they do not use their fists, but only their tongues. The great aim is to see who can dish up the greatest lies. The Mahommedans, who compose the greatest number, maintain justly that their prophet is master; in reality he is far from being able to cope with Joseph Smith. But, strangely enough, they are not conscious themselves of falsehood,

but are convinced that they are speaking the sheer truth. This gives Mahomet an indescribable appearance of simplicity. He resembles to a tittle the camel driver from Mecca.

I did not visit these places; I had proposed to go and see the most remarkable of all the cities in Hell—the City of Politicians, called also the City of Unrighteousness, and those towns lay far out of my route. Moreover, I was perfectly satisfied with what I had incidentally got to know of them. Cock-fighting, especially between blind cocks, has never been one of my passions.

I met a strange procession on the road. There was a carriage of the most remarkable description, in the middle of a crowd of persons wearing red caps, who partly dragged, partly pushed the machine along with wild yells. A man, dressed in the most elegant Parisian costume from the last century, was enthroned on a stage high above their heads. His daintily dressed and delicately powdered hair, white neckcloth, with its embroidered ends hanging down, his expensively worked velvet coat, and lace ruffles that fell over a pair of delicate hands as slender and white as a woman's, his silk pantaloons, stockings, and buckled shoes, altogether betokened a being of a refined and delicate nature. And yet this

man was one of the world's greatest butchers. The machine on which he was borne along triumphantly was a portable guillotine.

Do you know who he was from my description?

This delicate individual still thirsts ever after blood; but, throughout the whole of Hell, there is not a single drop to be found. His eyes are constantly directed to people's necks, and he thinks he is paying one a very great compliment by saying, "You have an extremely fine neck, sir, or madam, or miss," as the case may be. Followed by his executioners and admirers, he goes wherever there is a large concourse of people, as if there were something for him to do. But he is pushed aside amid jeers and scoffs, as an individual that has one fixed idea; but withal his madness is perfectly harmless. He is no longer an object of terror now, and he feels very, very unhappy over it. Yet he still has his partizans, sworn friends, who are quite agreed with him that it is a miserable state of things; and who every now and then, when he has found a good place for the guillotine, show him the politeness of allowing him to chop off their heads. Of course the process is not quite painless, but is no more accompanied by any danger than such things used to be at

Astley's or Price's Theatre. And yet it is a poor satisfaction after all, for not a single drop of blood flows from the wound.

It was a long journey I had undertaken. On my road I came to a town that resembled an immense monument. Darkly and silently it reared itself above a boundless, desert flat. Not a window, not a loophole showed any signs of life within; not a sound was to be heard, not a soul passed in or out of its gates. I went round it several times without meeting a living creature. At last I encountered a wandering soul, from whom I learnt that it was the City of the Inquisition. From him, too, I learnt that not long since a former powerful King of Spain had made his entrance into it with great pomp and a numerous retinue.

Should I, or should I not? Where His Catholic Majesty had gone in, I could enter too. Yes, I would go in.

On the gate I found a notice fastened up, the contents of which startled me not a little. They were as follows:

"Great *auto-da-fé* at which it has graciously pleased His Catholic Majesty, the glorious protector of the Holy Inquisition, to allow himself to be burned alive, after having first most graciously submitted to trial by torture *in extenso*. About six hundred heretics will, on

the present occasion, most respectfully wait upon His Majesty on the pyre, and will *pro formâ* accompany His Supreme Highness to Hell."

Rather an exciting piece of information! The poor Spanish monarch had come in good time, and a magnificent banquet was being held in honour of his visit. Should I, or not? I hesitated, but only for a moment. It was clear to me that within even the worst would be endurable; and then the invitation on the placard had something diabolically fascinating about it.

Yes, I must enter!

It was the second holy city I had visited. In a certain way these two cities stand side by side: for what the City of Destruction is to the land of the Jews, so is the City of the Inquisition to Christendom.

A shudder passes through one from head to foot on entering the walls of the city. The gate falls down of itself, with a subdued grating sound, that resembles an ominous signal of treachery. Even the stoutest conscience begins to quake. Gloomy and deserted, the city unfolds its narrow, crooked streets to view; it is as it were dead. The tall, dark houses have only a few barred windows, looking out into the streets. It is just as if horror dwelt within.

Here and there monkish forms steal along,

with their hats over their faces, in which are two eyelet holes; like corpses just come from the grave. Now and then, too, processions pass along the streets; either penitential processions, that present the most revolting spectacles of self-torture, or the still more mournful processions of thanksgiving, where the doomed persons are conducted with all pomp to the public place of torture or the pyre. The only thing that brings a little life into the town are the frequent *auto-da-fés*.

The city is only inhabited by individuals who have once been actively engaged in the service of the so-called Holy Inquisition; and yet admission is not denied to others; but it is only some few foolhardy people that have ventured within. I was one of them.

The City of the Inquisition is like a tomb that guards a terrible secret; and such in reality is the case. The terrible secret is this, whom will the unknown power of the Inquisition next seize, and submit to new experiments in the art of torture?

No one is safe; not even those persons who occupy the most exalted positions in this secret society, who have been patterns of zealous devotion in the service of Satanized Christendom. Even the very members of the secret court are not secure. Perhaps a person who has just condemned another

to the most excruciating tortures is the very next who is submitted to them himself. Secretly and swiftly the wretched beings are tracked to their lurking-places, and are dragged before the court. They are demanded to render an account of their faith, a thing they naturally are unable to do; no one in Hell can do it. So they are at once sentenced. But it is worth noticing that those who question the poor wretches, and who pass sentence over them, would be just as little able to render an account of their faith themselves. Thereupon the torture commences. Every invention of that sort, which the Holy Inquisition has discovered through the long ages of the past, is found collected here, and everything is tried in turn. Certainly they are spirits; but—oh, horror!—in imagination they suffer all the agonies which were connected with these tortures in the world! Once they raved against mankind in general; now it is against themselves reciprocally.

At last the stake usually follows. And though the flames do not burn, and though, if they did burn, the miserable wretches would be unable to feel them, yet in spirit, in imagination, they suffer all the agonies of one who is burnt to death.

Thus everything gives way to terror and nervous anxiety. One cannot be said to live

in this city, but rather to be in constant dread, to tremble with fear. My heart, too, was oppressed with nervous anxiety. It was of no use that I represented to myself that I must be quite safe, as I had never stood in any kind of connection whatsoever with this spiritual, political, and executive establishment in the world. But it was of no avail. I was obliged to do violence to my inclinations, in order to bring myself to remain.

The silence was frightful! And yet the city was on the point of displaying its most luxuriant life. Everything told that the hour of the great *auto-da-fé* was at hand. Masked forms swarmed from every house; it was only necessary to follow the stream to reach the scene of the festival. But when the thought of His Catholic Majesty, and the six hundred heretics on the burning faggots, forced its way into my soul, a suffocating fear came over me, which I could struggle against no longer. I left the feast to itself, and hurried back as if death, in the holy Hermandad's form, were sitting on my neck.

Fortunately, let me add, and contrary to all expectation, I slipped out of the city. The cold sweat stood out on my forehead; my knees trembled under me; and as soon as I found myself outside the walls of this fearful city, I sank to the ground in a state of insensibility.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

When one will adduce some prodigy in the world, one is wont to speak of the Pyramids, the ruins of Babylon or of Nineveh, the Caucasian or Chinese wall. I have seen nothing of all this, but still dare venture to assert that it is a mere nothing when compared with the mass of buildings which the City of Politicians affords.

And yet it is for the most part but a single day's work, that is a day of Hell, reckoned from one death darkness to the other. I call it here a day; but call it as you please, a month or a year, it is all the same. The city, in order to retain that appellation—which does, indeed, not quite harmonize with the general idea, as in the present case it is only a matter of one enormous building, one coherent, shapeless, and preposterous mass—the city is always being built, and is never completed. It attains the whole of its immense proportions during the period that elapses

from one darkness to another, and then collapses, from inability to sustain its own weight. At the next break of day it is commenced over again; but not quite from the very beginning; for the foundation work is given, a gigantic work in itself, surpassing all human conception. As regards its origin, one cannot obtain accurate information; but they do say, that it takes it from the Devil. But it is perfectly secure, it does not give so much as a hair's breadth. It is pierced in all directions by excavations and galleries, crossing and re-crossing each other, and these the work-people use as dwellings. I know of no better comparison for these excavations than the well-known Catacombs.

On this foundation the city is erected. A number of statesmen in Hell have taken on themselves the duty of building. Labourers are in abundance; they pour in by millions from all quarters of Hell, and bring their own materials with them. This makes me think, not of the Catacombs any longer, in which I thought just now I had hit upon such a striking comparison, but of a beehive. The instinct that assembles these countless souls in one common work, and sets them to the busiest employment, is similar to that observable among bees.

They bring their materials with them.

How often you may have heard these and similar expressions in the world,

"A stone lies on my heart," "A load fell off from my heart then."

Oh, my friend, these expressions are dangerous things, innocent though they seem. In the world it is only a form of expression with these stones, but here in Hell it is literal truth and reality. Every deceit, unrighteousness, merciless act, of which you were guilty, has become a stone upon your heart. Nobody is free from these stones on the heart. Oh, how they weigh! But of course there is a difference, a very great difference. Many have such heavy stones, and such a number of them, that it is quite appalling. Such a weight on one heart—it is a crushing idea. But, understand me aright, there is an opportunity of getting rid of all these stones here at the building of the City of Unrighteousness. Numberless souls pass their whole lives, if I may use the expression, in unloading stones from their hearts, and getting them laid in the walls. And there is not one single person that has not tried at least to get rid of a portion of these heart-stones. A desperate, fruitless attempt! Yet it must first be learnt by experience. But there are millions that are so overloaded with stones, and so full of anguish under their

weight, that no experience touches them. Instinct is the ruling power.

The architects, that is to say, the statesmen, deliver the corner-stone themselves. It is perfectly astounding to see what stones these people can roll from their hearts. Their proportions are fabulous. One now for the first time gains some idea of the tremendous treacheries, wickednesses, and infamies they have committed in the world. In real truth the world cannot produce greater infamies. Neither is there any one on whom so great an amount of responsibility rests as on these statesmen; greater even than on monarchs. For it is possible to be a prince without actually being a statesman, for one is a prince by birth; but it is impossible to be a statesman without undertaking a great portion of a prince's responsibility, and a statesman one only becomes of free choice. They knew well enough what they took upon themselves, and they have no excuse. These individuals held the welfare of millions in their hands; they ruled for happiness or for misery, for life and death, not at home only, but abroad. And what use have they made of this immense, this extensive authority? Wonderful beings, forsooth, are these statesmen! They seem to think that everything is permissible

in the interest of the state, or even only in the interests of the dynasty they serve; or — and now even their foothold gives way—only in the service of an abstract policy. They practise politics merely for the sake of experiment, or for play. They believe themselves to be exalted above all laws of morality; and, as it were, presuppose that God will judge them by themselves by a different law, a kind of convenience law. Unrighteousness, deceit, treachery, and violence, they look upon as duties either towards themselves or towards society, and pay no heed to the blood and wails of thousands during the discharge of these reputed duties.

Wonderful beings! I repeat; and a wonderful world that pays them homage, and shouts out its applause! Here in Hell it has become quite patent that the greatest crimes that are committed in the world were done in the service of a so-called high policy, and that the greatest criminals are to be found among the be-titled agents of this policy.

What masses of stone these politicians can roll from them! Neither do they neglect any opportunity of doing it; but their peculiar work is that of an architect, of directing the employment of those millions of hands, which at every instant are delivering millions of stones.

But there is a great difficulty connected with it. For there are thousands of architects, each of whom builds according to his own method and device. No two of them are alike, not even those who build side by side. And some of them are separated by a space of ten or twenty miles.

The circumference of the city—bear in mind that it is one edifice—would on this computation amount to over two hundred miles. But you must not attach any weight to this statement, for it may be altogether wrong. On every little portion of this immense circumference is a politician or architect, who builds away briskly without troubling himself about his neighbour to the right or to the left of him, to say nothing of his more remote colleagues. Under these circumstances, there must naturally be immense difficulty, if not impossibility, in completing the state.

I say state after mature reflection, and not city. For they do not wish to build a city alone, but to found a state, a pattern state, of course an universal state. That is the first thing. When the state is completed, a king is to be chosen, that is the second. That is the reason why one sees so many kings without territory roaming about in the neighbourhood of the City of Unrighteousness.

They have use for a king, naturally all are aspirants to the crown. But the prospects are distant, and very doubtful withal, for only one can possess it. But they live in hopes, and keep in the neighbourhood, lacing themselves up as tight as possible in order to cut a respectable figure, and to attract attention to themselves. Yet this does not prevent them from casting one stone after another on the walls as they pass by, as often as they think they are not observed. Some of these are the largest that are to be found there, only surpassed in size by those of their *quondam* ministers.

Moreover, the statesmen are perfectly aware of the immense difficulty this building entails. Heaps of notes cross each other along the entire circuit of the wall, alternately of a flattering, convincing, and threatening nature. The regular diplomats occupy themselves in nothing else than in writing notes. Numberless embassies, too, pass backwards and forwards, sent out with the express purpose of over-reaching in one way or another, or, if possible, of corrupting the adverse party. But they never succeed; the embassies are as empty as the notes. So at length they have resort to the last resource, viz., of holding a congress in order to bring the matter to a satisfactory result. In the city itself there is

not a spot of neutral ground to be found, so they agree to hold their meeting on a little muddy island, lying in the black river that winds along under the very walls of the town. But to get over there, there is none other way than to swim for it. One might suppose that these high-born statesmen, ditto fine diplomatists, would find it tough work to plunge into the slimy, stinking water, resembling congealed blood. But they do not mind it at all; on the contrary, it is just their element.

You remember that the black river has its source in the unrighteousness of the universe, its frauds and falsehoods. Merrily they roll in it; it is a real refreshment to them. They do not stick at anything, at any sacrifice whatsoever, in the service of the state; but, as I said, it is a real pleasure to them, so far, for instance, as there can be any talk of pleasure in Hell. They are quite merry, these noble, otherwise so demure, gentlemen, and cannot refrain from attacking, and give each other a good sousing on the way. Many a statesman celebrates his finest, his happiest triumph, in the black river.

It is a most remarkable sight to see them tumbling over each other, like a shoal of frolicsome porpoises. Sometimes they get entangled, as it were, in knots, so that one can

only see a confused mass of arms, legs, and heads. Then they step ashore, and at the same moment assume their modest, stately bearing. Once more they become the refined, reserved men of the world, as stiff as pokers, and with an eye at every finger's end. It is quite impossible to see which of them has had a ducking, and which has given one. Thereupon the congress commences.

With what astuteness, refinement, and craftiness, they encounter each other! On one point they are agreed, that there must be some plan if the work of the state is to succeed; and that if they persist in building after the old, crazy, unconnected method, the edifice will never be able to sustain itself, but will again collapse at some point of preposterousness. But this is the only point on which there is any degree of unity observable among them. They seat themselves in a circle to negotiate; numerous proposals are brought forward, but are rejected with scarcely any discussion at all. Mutual jealousy renders any understanding impossible.

At length a proposition is made, and is carried, that every one shall give a sketch of his plan. Great expectations are raised from this common product; but the result is as sad as it is ridiculous. When the concocted plan

is made known, it appears to be the most crazy rubbish. It is all confusion, and puts common sense to the blush; but no one will relinquish his individual rights, and so it cannot end in aught but nonsense. Balderdash and twaddle float in the air, and the congress works away in a perfect pestilential atmosphere.

It is of no avail that the most moving speeches are made about the beauty and exemplariness of a simple and honourable policy —about the infernal equilibrium, without which the direst revolutions and confusions are to be feared—about the necessity of all Hell, which none can resist with impunity—about humanity, and the demands of morality, which in our days should render every brutal invasion an impossibility—about the exalted degree of education which Hell has reached, and which apparently offers the most unfailing guarantee for a happy solution of the question —about principles which must be held even to the death, nay, even much farther—about sacred rights, which no one can infringe with impunity, and which entail even great sacrifices for the sake of duty, &c., &c.

In short, in no chamber, in no parliament in the world, are such great oratorical powers, such powers of garrulity, displayed as in this congress in Hell. But it is altogether in vain.

Every one sticks to his own opinion; and there is nothing left than to declare the congress to be closed.

But before separating, they testify their heartfelt gratitude to each other for all the courtesy, assistance, and valuable information they have mutually derived in their most honourable assembly. They flow over with mutual compliments over the deep insight, the penetration that has been developed; over the masterly way in which the proceedings have been conducted to so felicitous an issue!

Thereupon they separate in perfect friendship. But this is no reason against their giving one another as many duckings as possible on their return journey. The deeper into the mud the greater the triumph, the greater the honour.

And so they set indefatigably to work at their building again, though they are perfectly convinced that there is no sense in it. And time passes on. The splendour of Paradise is long since past; the light begins sensibly to wane. But they build and build, and their hearts become ever lighter and lighter. It is natural; they get rid of their stones by degrees. The city rears itself up in immense, shapeless masses, and in proportions that are perfectly fabulous, and contrary to all reason.

The higher they build, the more apparent does the absurdity become.

It may last for a time; but it cannot possibly hold together for long. At a certain point it must give way; and this takes place almost simultaneously with the utter darkness that is coming on. The end is evidently at hand. Already they have woven a wreath of the most beautiful diplomatic enactments, when the whole suddenly collapses. The crash sounds through Hell, and makes it vibrate again. Every stone in the immense building falls back once more on to its respective heart, and Hell re-echoes with despairing cries of woe and wailing.

Only the huge foundation remains, and on this sad relic the kings seat themselves, crushed down under the weight of their crowns and the misfortunes of their kingdoms; doubly miserable they sit there, like Marius on the ruins of Carthage. And it is night! Hell is hushed in silence, save only for the sighs of the kings!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE light is on the wane. My thoughts incessantly revert to Lili; there I ever find something which bears at least some resemblance to peace.

How she struggled against her illness, as long as it was possible to struggle; how strong her tender, delicate constitution made itself, in order to tranquillize and comfort us!

At length she could get no ease. We only thought of embarking for Europe once more as soon as possible. But she expressed a wish to return to Bethlehem, and we could not but give way to it. And though this little journey was accomplished with all the care and caution possible, we felt very uneasy about the result. But Lili assured us that she was better, and only needed repose.

A great part of the day she passed under an awning on the little terrace above the convent wall. I used to sit there with her (I was scarcely ever away from her side), I

might say grieved to death. It was there that she told me her last tale, in order to show me how brave, how animated she felt. Yes, it was her last. It was not the exertion—her happy smile, sweet, soft, melodious voice testified against that—no, it was Death itself that was too strong for her.

"It was in the early dawn. Life was beginning to be visible through the night fogs that rested over the convents between Mount Olives and Jerusalem.

"The Apostle James, the Lord's brother, surnamed the Good, was proceeding down the mountain. He had been spending the night on the mount in devotion and prayer, after the example of his Master. This spot was dear to him beyond all others, for the Lord had once fought his last severe fight there in prayer.

"The night was past, and he was now returning to his home. As he emerged from the olive grove, he paused a moment on the open slope above the valley. The sun was on the point of rising; the fog was slowly lifting, and dispersing before the morning breeze.

"Close by was the garden of Gethsemane; and the brook Cedron wound itself along in the cleft below. On the other side, Jerusalem reared itself up, with its mighty but decayed walls; far above these the temple towered in

glorious magnificence—that temple that should so soon be laid waste.

"Yet James hoped that he should not live to see the abomination of desolation which was to come. For he loved his city and his people. A happy feeling, which could not deceive him, told him that he would have fought his fight and won his crown before. Yes, it was a happy feeling; for he loved his Lord deeper than his city or his people; and to his thoughts it was the fullness of bliss to be for ever with Him.

"He was proceeding, then, on his way, when a woman met him. She was young and lovely, but the stamp of sorrow was impressed upon her brow. She was but seventeen years old! The fleet tears coursed down over her cheeks, and she wrung her hands in the deepest agony. As she approached she fell down at the Apostle's feet, and besought him to have mercy upon her: 'Her husband had just recovered from a violent fever, but was wasting away like a shadow. No physician could give them advice, and they were very poor. He would die, alas, die! And they loved each other dearly, so dearly!'

"The Apostle made no reply, but stood regarding her with a look that pierced to her very soul; he seemed as if he could read her soul, as it had been a book. He knew her. She

had often been present when he was preaching the Gospel. But faith had not yet been able to take root in her heart. She had too great a trust in the world still; she loved herself still too much. It seemed to her too heavy a burden to renounce the world at so young an age, and heavier still to renounce herself.

"The old man regarded her for a long time in silence. She felt herself strangely ill at ease under his glance; yes, she trembled under it. For though it seemed to be mild, there was a seriousness, an air of authority about it, which God alone can grant. At length the Apostle broke silence by asking:

"'Woman, dost thou love him then so dearly?'

"'Yes, father, I do love him,' she answered, with a trembling voice.

"'As dearly as thou dost thyself?' he inquired further.

"'Oh, far, far more!' she exclaimed; and could scarcely get the words forth for her sobs.

"'Well, then, my daughter, there is one means by which you can preserve your husband for life. It is a difficult one! but reflect, it is the only one. Go round the city from house to house, and beg for charitable gifts for your husband!'

"'Alas, father! money, I fear, can profit him no longer.'

"'You shall not beg for so much as a mite of money, but for a mite of time. All the days which good people will dispense with from their lives, shall, by God's grace, be added to the sum of your husband's days.'

"The woman thought, 'There are many good persons; and persons in general value the days of their life at much less than they do their money. The last they cling to; while they squander away and do not know how to make an end of the first.' She thanked the old man, and with a heart full of blessings went away consoled.

"And she went around Jerusalem with humble, earnest requests, as she told the story of her dying husband, and about the man of God, who had commended her to the mercy of pious individuals.

"'May God bless you,' she ended; 'if not for any longer, at least for a couple of days!'

"But she met with but poor success. Some mocked her, and thought she must have lost her senses; others drove her from their doors with words of abuse; others thought it was a capital joke, but did not venture to take any part in it. In many places they believed her tale, but then there was not one who had even a single day to spare. The greater part excused themselves by saying that they were weakly,

and had not a long time to live; or they still had so much to do in the world; or they had a large family to provide for. Every day was precious to them. And, oddly enough, those very persons who wasted their time the most, were in general the most parsimonious. But at some places she had to put up with the bitterest, cruellest indignities."

Thus far she had come in her tale, when one of those fearful occurrences, of which I cannot think, even now, without shuddering, suddenly broke off the thread of the narrative, and the thread of life was broken at the same moment. Her strength was now totally gone. She could deceive us at least no longer. Life in her was but like a lamp that flickers and flares for one moment, and the next is suddenly extinguished.

Year after year ran by; yes, fifteen years had fled! I was young no longer. During this time Lili's broken-off story often came into my thoughts. One day, in a sorrowful mood, I happened to mention it to a friend, who expressed his lively regret that there was no continuation to this history.

Fifteen years! and these fifteen years had been made bad use of, in a manner unworthy of Lili's memory.

One day an old number of a popular maga-

zine fell in my way. Among the stories in it I was astounded to find one which had the title of "The Legend of the Begging Girl."

Yes! my presentiments had not deceived me, it really was the continuation of Lili's story. Certainly it was not exactly written as Lili would or could have told it. But its development was quite in accordance with Lili's spirit. No other termination could have been imagined.

Here, then, follows the conclusion :—

"First, she knocked at the door of a rich money changer and merchant. He had the best stall in the fore-court of the temple, and in confidential moments he would sometimes boast to his friends that he had even the governor himself under his thumb. And no one doubted that he spoke the truth. This first visit was not without hope. The old Rabbi bethought himself, after having listened to her complaint. He looked upon the matter as a kind of speculation. Perhaps the dying man had money, a great deal of money, and would pay a high price for what perhaps, rightly received, was not worth a denarius. 'How much would he give for one day, a month, a year?' Ah, hope had deceived her! Her sick husband had not much money.

"Farther on she met a Roman centurion.

Certainly there was little hope that a heathen should take compassion on her, a Jewess. But he looked so good; she would, at all events, make the attempt.

"The centurion understood her better than she had anticipated; for what faith did not, superstition did effect.

"'My poor lass,' he answered, stroking his bushy beard, 'my life is so uncertain; in fact I scarcely know whether I possess one. Even by to-morrow it might be all over with me. So you see it would be very reckless in me to dispose of that which I do not possess. The gods forbid! Moreover it is contrary to the articles of war. My life, such as it is, is at the entire disposal of the emperor. By Hercules, I am very sorry for you! My poor child, do you require any money?'

"No, it was not money she needed. So they parted, and the centurion proceeded on his way with heavy steps, as his spurs jingled on the stones.

"Next she went to a large manufacturer. He was in the factory, where more than a hundred hands were busily employed. He was one of the ten lepers on whom the Lord had once taken compassion, and of whom only one had returned to give thanks. But he was not that one. By chance the woman addressed

him in the very same words which he once, in his misery, had addressed to the Son of God, 'Sir, have mercy on me!' But he did not have mercy. He pointed to the busy life in the factory and answered, 'Woman, see how the work goes on! And yet I cannot make the supply meet the demand. After this, then, can you for a moment suppose that I have any, even the very smallest portion of my short allotted span of life to dispose of? Woman, you must go elsewhere.'

"But the woman continued, 'Sir, for Rabbi Mirjam's sake, who once had compassion on you, have mercy now on poor wretched me!'

"The man started, turned scarlet, and then became very pale. Some time elapsed before he spoke.

"'You are a very unreasonable woman. You know that my life is much shorter than other people's. I only first began to live when I was cleansed of my leprosy, at a very advanced age. And yet you desire of me that I should shorten the number of my days for your sake! Go; you are hindering my people! I have already wasted more of my time upon you than I had intended or could afford.'

"On coming out into the street once more she found herself near the temple. But though the poor creature was so engrossed with her

sorrow, she did not forget to put her mite into the alms-box as she passed by. A little farther on she met a priest returning home after the service in the temple was over.

"'Thou God of Abraham!' exclaimed the priest, as he gathered up his long robe, the hem of which the poor woman appeared as if she would kiss. 'Thou God of Abraham!' he repeated with upraised hands after hearing the woman's story. 'Hearest thou this woman? Wherefore has she chosen me whereon to pour forth her filth? She must either be crazed, or some witch.'

"'Sir, I am not crazed!' was the lowly answer.

"'Well, then, you must be a witch,' he interrupted her, as he spat upon her. 'Take care that you do not become amenable to the law, and be stoned to death!'

"The next place she tried was the house of an illustrious Syrian, of princely blood, who had come to Jerusalem to enjoy life. And he had enjoyed it in copious draughts, and was very near the lees. Idle as he was, he did not know how to pass away the time quickly enough. If the woman had known this, doubtless her hopes would have risen considerably.

"Admission was vouchsafed her without

difficulty. Through a court-yard, which resembled a little Paradise, where beautiful marble statues peeped out from among the dark foliage, where fountains rippled and birds were singing, and the loveliest flowers in the world were massed together to diffuse their rich perfume; through rooms which glittered with Tyrian purple, Roman mosaic work, marble, gold and ivory, where a domestic in gorgeous livery was stationed at every door she passed through, she was ushered into an apartment where the lord of the house was reclining after his bath. He lay dozing on a couch with his eyes half closed. An Abyssinian slave sat at his head; she was as dark as the night, and was fanning him with a fan made of peacock's feathers; while at his feet sat a Greek slave as fair and bright as day, gently stroking the soles of his feet with her soft palm. Both of them were lovely, each in her way; but the poor suppliant heeded them not. Still less did she think that she herself, with her clear olive complexion, mid-way between black and white, united the loveliness of day and night in her own person, and was even prettier than either of the two.

"'Woman!' answered the young man in a sleepy tone, 'it is quite true that I do not set

a great value on my life; my existence is but a miserable one. But why I should make you a present of that of which I have enough, or more than enough, I do not really know. I lay no claim to nobility of nature. I want something in return for what I give; and what have you, pray, to give me? Go to your own people, woman! Let me remain what I am—a stranger to you!'

"The poor woman was about to depart. But a sudden exclamation from the young man caused her to stay. At length he had opened his eyes, and beheld her ravishing beauty. "'Wait a little!' he exclaimed, as he rose up from the couch. 'I have still something to say to you.'

"A bright idea had seized him. He needed excitement; but means of excitement had become rare. But here was one close at hand.

"'I said—something for something. The days of my life are at your service; a few or many as you please; but you must offer something corresponding. Let us play! See here are dice. I risk a portion of my life, and you your virtue, or a part of your virtue, as you may please to call it. How much can your virtue be worth? Only do not be too snappish, and too extravagant in your ideas! Let us say six months of my life! Is that too

little? Well, then—I am no miser—a full year then—two years if you like. By the temple I would not let you slip for a trifle!' he continued, as he seized hold of her wrist. 'I say three years! . . . That is a high price, and a high stake. . . . You will not? Fool, your husband need never know it! You have only to go and wash in Jordan, and your sin is washed off, and you are as pure and clean as ever. . . . You are in earnest then? You will not? . . . Then go to Gehenna!'

"Blushing with shame, and with the warm tears streaming down her face, the young woman left the Syrian's house. It was long before she ventured to let any one else see her face.

"But it was a holy matter; she dared not give it up yet. So she came in God's name to one of the rich men who lived every day in luxury and pleasure. Enjoyment was his life; without that there was nothing. Once he had followed a better course of living. From his youth up he had kept the commandments, and had placed his hopes on eternal life. It was that same young man who once had come to the Lord, and had said, 'I have kept the commandments from my youth. Good Master, what lack I yet?' And the Lord had answered, 'If thou wilt

be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor. So shalt thou have treasure in Heaven; and come and follow me.' But when he heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

"From that hour the young man had given up all thoughts about eternal life. He had gone over to the Sadduces, who say that there is no life after death, and had become one of their sworn disciples. The poor woman, then, could not have come to a more unfortunate place. The rich man laughed at her, and said:

"'Fool! I have nothing save that same life, and you desire that I shall parcel it out to Crethi and Plethi. Know that every day of my life is valuable to me, and is not to be weighed with gold. You have come to the wrong street, my child. Turn round the corner and go to the Pharisees.'

"And to the Pharisees she went. She went to the house of one of the most esteemed lawyers, one of the great lights of Israel. Not only could he give an account of the Thora to the very minutest tittle; but caused it to appear in his own life in the most perfect manner. His righteousness was so resplendent that it lightened up even the darkest nooks wherever he came. His praise, there-

fore, was naturally in everybody's mouth. Neither could he be unknown to the young woman.

"The Pharisee saw that the woman was young and beautiful. He received her, therefore, in a way more than friendly, and seemed to lay her prayer to heart in a compassionate mood.

"'Poor child,' he said, turning his eyes round to the great edification of his clients and disciples, who were assembled in the ante-room. 'Poor child, I must hear thee further on this matter. Follow me into my private chamber.'

"There the Pharisee let the mask fall from him without further ceremony. Suddenly he assumed the appearance of those grim, stiff images of the Satyrs, which, according to the latest fashion, formed the doorpost to the magnificent gate through which she had passed into the house. Leering, he took the young wife's hand in his, and pressing it tenderly said:

"'Let us drop it, my lovely one. We are quite alone here. Let me enjoy thy youth and beauty whilst you enjoy them too. Your reward shall be great; great your happiness. It is quite clear that it is all over with your husband. Let him die, and be gathered to

his fathers. But you, my charmer, live for pleasure, together with me.

. . "'Hush! it is of no use for you to raise your voice. . . . There is none to hear you. . . . Shameless woman, you tempt me in vain! Dost not know that the people with one voice call me holy and righteous? Pack yourself off, lewd woman! And dost hear, keep your tongue in your mouth. Perhaps you would like to play the chaste Susannah's part over again. But take care, do not make the attempt. Not even a Daniel could save you!'

"Trembling in every limb, and half fainting, she left the house of the righteous man.

"For two days she went thus about from house to house. Only every now and then she ran home to see after her sick husband, whom her poor neighbours tended by turns. But her anxious prayers had brought her nothing; nothing at all, saving only here and there hard and insulting words, and that which was still far worse.

"At last, the evening of the second day, she gave it up in despair. Overcome with fatigue and pain she sank down at the Damascus Gate. There the poor thing lay, brooding as it were over her misery. But suddenly her tears ceased flowing, a smile passed over her suffering features, as if it had been a sun-

beam. As if she knew nothing of weariness, she rises up and hastens to seek out the Apostle.

"'Now, my daughter, what fortune hast thou met with?' inquired the old man, with the tenderest compassion.

"'O father! men have no compassion in them; the world is evil, and thinks only of itself, and of its carnal lusts.'

"'True my child; compassion is to be found with God alone!'

"'Yes, father, and thither will I flee. There is none who would give me as much as one single day, and there are many days belonging to a life; many days are needed to preserve my husband to me. I was nearly despairing. But then it suddenly occurred to me that I too had a life, a long life considering my youthfulness. Oh, thou man of God! cannot I then myself alone give in one what the multitude refused to give mite by mite? My husband is half my life. Let him then take my half! Thus we could live and die together. Or let him, if needs be, take it all! I would willingly die, if only he might live!"

"Thus she spoke, as her tears fell fast and hot. But the Apostle laid his blessed hand on her head, and said with a voice of emotion:

"'My daughter, be of good cheer! Thou

hast found grace before God. Go home! Thy husband will live, and thou shalt live with him!"

Such is the history! Do not expect me to tell you the impression it made on me! Enough to say that it was exactly as if Lili were speaking to me from the other world, and that I let my head fall down between my hands and wept bitterly, not so much for her as for myself.

One thing stood out clearly before me, and with this thought I received some comfort. Had these terms been proposed to me, I would joyfully have shared my life with Lili; yes, I feel certain I would unconditionally have given my life for her. So deeply had I loved her. But of what use was the story now to me? Only some tears, which no one could see: only some tears!

I end this letter by the last quickly disappearing gleam of light. I shudder, I shudder! A great portion of the horror which this death-darkness contains is due to the conception of the last day. When will it come? Who knows? But it will, it will come some time!

Damned! It is a terrible word. A perfect abyss of horror, misery, and wretchedness,

discloses itself in it. But am I then really lost, eternally lost? No, not yet, of that I feel certain. But, on the other hand, is there any possibility of salvation? To this question I have no answer. Both yea and nay are too much. At times it seems to me that there is a possibility. But it is merely a gleam; I cannot hold it fast, however painfully I exert myself. Sometimes when I have struggled and suffered the most severely, a wondrous peace comes into my soul, a marvellous consolation. In Hell truly no repentance can take place. But that which we suffer and experience in memory and reality! Oh! may it not perhaps make the soul ripe for repentance, so that the same moment it is released hence in order to stand before the judgment bar, it may flee away to the Saviour, and find mercy and peace, even on the very brink of condemnation?

Even if it were to be a thousand years, aye, tens of thousands of years, oh, what a powerful hope would it be! Ten thousand years in torments would be dirt cheap for such salvation at the very last moment.

Lili! Yes I know she loves me, and that with the Saviour's own love. If that wondrous power that love possesses is aught more than a fable, at least it forms one single link

between me and life. And I know, Lili, that this link will never give way to all eternity. But a link which cannot break, and yet which cannot bring about a reunion would be a non-entity.

And can Lili be perfectly happy without me? That is another question! Can she be perfectly happy and I be lost? Can God have the heart to allow her to lack that which was most precious to her in the world, and what, next to Him, is most precious to her still? I cannot conceive it!

So there is then a hope left, and this hope is attached to her. Not that she has power to save me, but because it was vouchsafed to her to lead me to the Saviour's feet. Perhaps some day it will be vouchsafed to her to make the sign of the cross over me, as I did over her in her death. Did she not say at her very last hour, "We shall meet again?" And with this assurance she died happy.

Can it be possible that God should have granted her a happy death, that was founded upon a falsehood, and based upon a disgraceful error? No, it is impossible! Therefore, the conclusion is . . . but I dare not; I dare not make it!

And yet a presentiment of the possibility of redemption and salvation before the final

word is spoken, and everything is over, prevails in Hell. Here hope again peers forth, and though it be so weak and so misty, still it is a mighty hope.

Could God suffer that such a hope should gleam through the wretched souls of countless millions if it were merely a miserable illusion? No; impossible again! The Lord is a righteous God. We only suffer that which we have deserved. But just as certain is it that God is merciful. No deception can take place!

But stay, might not the deception be a part of that very punishment; might it not, like everything else, be a natural consequence of the life we have led in the world?

Oh, miserable man that I am! Where is my hope which so lately lighted up my soul? . . .

It is again total, total darkness!

CHAPTER XXXV.

. . . . Now it is breaking! . . . Nay, do not be disturbed . . . it is but empty talk; it is not breaking!

In Hell there is nothing that breaks. I daresay you think at once about hearts. But here in Hell they are able to endure any amount of wretchedness, destitution, and suffering.

No, it is not so easy for anything to break here! I say anything, and mean by that, if not the heart, something else at least. I buoy myself up at least with the hope that it will turn out good in the end; worse it is impossible to be. But here everything holds desperately together; it is antecedent and consequence, cause and effect, all in one. If ever it were necessary to give Hell another name, it might well be termed the world of consequences.

You can well understand that no one could

write the above except with teeth firmly set with maddening pain. You would be horrified to see me; me, whom you still, perhaps, call your good old friend. I say, God preserve you from it! But I perceive that I must collect myself. It was not to pour my howls into your ears that I took up my pen; but simply to conclude my letter so that at length it might get sent off. It will be a long, long time, perhaps, before you hear from me again. Truly you are my friend; but you will not be offended, if when it comes so far with me that I give up everything, I give up you too.

The above lines are written by the last glimmer of the fading light. How I shuddered at the approach of the long, long night. For each time the night of death returns, our horror becomes more terrible. When darkness falls, Hell is, as it were, razed to the ground. Those thousand different objects with which the power of imagination has tenanted it, in similarity to the world,—castles, villas, promenades, cities, theatres, churches, clubs, inns, &c. &c., in fine, everything that belongs to the comforts or pleasures of life in the world, exists no longer. Every trace of habitableness vanishes away; and Hell resembles a huge, pitchy dark cellar, whose tenants, few or many,

man or woman, select or riff-raff, have to accommodate themselves and crawl together as best they may. While the light prevails, by the power of imagination one can adapt oneself at pleasure. There is no need to use any self-denial. Certainly, the pleasure one derives is awfully meagre; it is but a shadow. But still it gives one occupation, though in a manner extremely painful, and in a certain sense serves to sustain the animal powers. In the day, for instance, I can, without much difficulty, delude myself into the belief that I am living in my comfortable house in —— Street; and that I am lying in my warm, cosy bed, waiting for the servant to bring me my cup of coffee or chocolate. But at night I cannot do this. Naked, poor, utterly miserable, without a house, without a place of refuge, in other words, the prey of a terrible reality, I crouch tremblingly in the darkness, neither knowing nor caring with whom I am in company. There is no longer any talk of place or society; everything is dissolved in a liquid gloom. I only know and feel that I am in Hell, in the company of the damned.

And then evil thoughts stream into my heart, and encamp round about it, as they did round the ill-fated Jerusalem of old. And the

abomination of desolation is there, distress and wretchedness, of which the world has never known an equal.

There, then, I sat that long, fearful night, with teeth gnashing, and a fire burning within. In the world one often hears speak of obstinacy in a combat. Ah! even the most obstinate struggle would be bliss, indeed, compared to my condition! For here in Hell there is no more any such thing as a struggle. Plenty of madness, plenty of self-devouring, but no struggle. One is a victim—a miserable victim, abandoned by earth and Heaven. Every little demon has full liberty to fix his claws into you, and to tear and flay you as it pleases. Understand me; I am speaking figuratively. For there are no small demons in Hell saving our own evil thoughts, remorse, lusts, and passions. On the other hand, there is a great Devil; but God be thanked, he has no power over our souls yet.

This night he held his wonted review in Hell. He does not always use the night for this purpose; though he prefers it. In itself the death-night is an abyss of horrors. But it can be worse; there is an abyss below the abyss, a horror above all horrors. Suddenly it comes on, and causes the whole of Hell to

stiffen. The millions of wretched souls are, as it were, moulded into one, in dismay and horror unmentionable. For they know that there is one among them who knows no mercy, and who devours himself till the time comes when he can devour them alive. He is amongst them; but no one knows where; and that is just the most terrible thing. It sparkles through the gloom, just as when one strokes the coat of a black cat the wrong way; long threads of fire pierce the darkness in all direction. It is the path along which he is proceeding; but where is he, where? His glowing eyes, perhaps, are glaring on the wretched being who is well-nigh fainting as he ventures to ask this question.

Oh, let me be dumb! or at least pass over these horrors quickly! Enough when I say that twenty times this night I thought I could feel myself in the claws of the Evil One. I will wrench from myself an instance.

On one occasion it seemed to me as if my inside was a fathomless pool, and that the fish within it were my sins. And the Devil amused himself by fishing there. Now one, now another lust or folly he placed upon his hook with a leer, and threw his line into the depth of my heart. And fine sport he had;

one fish—that is to say, one sin—after another he drew up with a derisive laugh. At last the hook lay hold of my heart. . . . Oh! it was fearful! Ask no more of me!

It was, of course, only a fancy, at least only a pastime, the Evil One was driving with me. But for all that, while there is nothing more real than death, I suffered death a hundred times in these fancies, in this sport.

At last—I know not how long a time intervened—Hell once more relapsed into its normal state of misery. Again it drew breath, as if after a long and horrible nightmare.

Can you imagine that it was a real relief to feel myself once more in the power of the small demons. There was, I am almost tempted to say, something quite comfortable in it. It is always a great thing to be oneself, be the conditions what they may. The whole of my life unrolled itself before me. One remorse after another came forward, and hooked itself firmly on to my heart. At last it was a mass of wounds.

But with remorse a longing so deep, so painful, united itself, as I have never felt before. It was not the world I longed after. The world, with all its pleasures, was a dead thing to me. No, it was after a living soul

I longed, after one of those whose love I had once possessed; Lili, my aunt, my father, separated from them for all eternity, a yawning, impassable abyss fixed between them and me. But my mother was still left, my precious mother; between her and me there was only death, and there is truth in the saying, "Love is stronger than death!" And my mother stood nearest of all to me. She must then be the best of all. What in the whole world can be compared to a mother? Languishing I turned with all the longing of my heart towards her.

And here, too, remorse came in, and appeared in exact proportion to my longing. How poorly had I repaid her tender love! I had been her all; but how little, in truth, had she been to me. Frequently I had been very near misconstruing her. Not unfrequently had the foul thought entwined itself around me that she was at bottom of a cold, selfish nature, who thought more of form and decorum than of substance, and who, in all things, had her own self in mind, to whom a life of Christianity had merely been a matter of outside form, and who, in matters of faith and love, had thought less of offering up herself and the world as a sacrifice, than of bringing sacrifice after

sacrifice to herself and to the world. What insane ingratitude! How bitterly I repented it now; how deeply I reproached myself for it! Oh! it is true, she had been the best, the tenderest of mothers, a mirror of perfection to women in general. In the painful emotion of these moments I felt weaker and softer than ever I had done before. "Mother, mother!" my heart sighed within me like a little child. Yes, mock me, if you can find in your heart to do so, my heart clung to her as a tender infant that longs for its mother's breast.

It was the first time I felt a burning wish to return to earth. Its invisible, iron bands, took stronger and stronger hold of me. The ghost nature, which hitherto had lain dormant within me, began to make itself apparent, while, in my agony, I heeded only one thing, "Mother, mother!"

* * * *

Dawn at last set in. The first object my eyes fell on, as soon as I could discern anything, was a crouching form, that sat with its back towards me, a little distance off. A strange and anxious presentiment came over me at the sight. My breast heaved. Had I

had a heart like yours, I should have heard it beat.

All at once the form turned towards me. . . God in Heaven! . . . That face, pale as a corpse, horribly contracted, . . . it was my mother's!

Horrified, I rushed away in flight. I could not, I would not believe my eyes.

But, oh, my friend, believe it, or believe it not, it was my mother still!

My poor mother! It was the heart-blow, it was the filling up of the measure, if such a thing could exist in Hell.

What more shall I say? The language of despair, the only one I can speak, would but grate harshly on your ear, it would not reach your heart. Ah! if we could only, wretched beings that we both are, have the consolation of weeping together, of pouring forth our sobs and wails in company, of exchanging sorrows and pains in an intimate, lively affection!

But it is not granted us!

We know naught of tears; and words wherewith to lament over each other have, as yet, at least, never been found. And no wonder love itself seems to have died out for ever. We sit long, livelong hours, together, an inseparable pair.

Call it company if you will, but it is a company more barren and waste than any desert. No tiny shoot of life buds forth between us. We have nothing to say to each other. We are afraid to look upon each other. It is all cold, all dead, between us. But each of us glows with heat; but that glow with which we could warm each other seems to be quenched for ever.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Rom. viii. 1.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Rom. x. 9.

AMEN!

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